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*Edw. Bradner*

THE  
PROPHETIC HISTORY  
OF THE  
CHRISTIAN RELIGION

EXPLAINED; OR  
A BRIEF EXPOSITION  
OF THE  
REVELATION OF ST. JOHN;  
ACCORDING

TO A NEW DISCOVERY OF PROPHETICAL TIME, BY WHICH  
THE WHOLE CHAIN OF PROPHECIES IS ARRANGED, AND  
THEIR CERTAIN COMPLETION PROVED FROM HISTORY  
DOWN TO THE PRESENT PERIOD—WITH SUMMARY  
VIEWS OF THOSE NOT YET ACCOMPLISHED.

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BY THE REV. J. GEORGE SCHMUCKER,  
*Pastor of the Evangelic Lutheran Church, York-Town, Penn.*

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VOL. I.

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*Tempora distingue et concordat Domini Verbum.*



**BALTIMORE:**

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1817.

*Handwritten signature or mark*

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## RECOMMENDATIONS.

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The attentive reader will find abundance of entertainment, instruction and edification in the perusal of this work. The prophetic chronology by which the different prophecies are arranged into one continual series, and which seems to accord so well with history, merits the particular attention of the learned. I have no doubt, the Lord will graciously bestow his blessing upon it, especially in the present critical juncture of times. The long and intimate friendship existing between the author and myself, prevents me from saying more, than to express my wish, that his learned labours may meet with that success, which they so eminently and deservedly merit.

J. HENRY CH. HELMUTH, D. D.

Senior Reverendi Ministerii of the Evangelic Lutheran Church in  
Pennsylvania and the adjoining States, and Pastor of the  
Lutheran Church in Philadelphia.

*Philadelphia, Oct. 11, 1816.*

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*Reverend and Respected Sir,*

I have read with attention and pleasure, your "Prophetic History, &c." In a style easy and luminous, and with a train of illustration purely evangelic, you have prepared a pleasing and edifying entertainment for your future readers. I am aware of the difficulties that have offered themselves to the Commentator on the Revelation of John. Every endeavour to elevate the veil, by which its prophecies as to import and period, are con-



sealed from public view, deserves commendation. I shall be happy to see the principles contained in your introduction, employed in elucidating the latter chapters of the Apocalypse.

I am, Reverend Sir,

Your attentive Fellow Servant,

In the Kingdom and Patience of Jesus,

W. STAUGHTON, D. D.

Pastor of the Baptist Church in the city of Philadelphia.

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That the prophecies of the Apocalypse, are progressing in their accomplishment, by the events of our own days, is an interesting truth; and that its credibility is abundantly established by the history of the ages, since its publication in the world, is clear to every well instructed and unprejudiced mind. The partial conflict of interpreters, are so far from invalidating, that their discrepancies of sentiment on minor points, have exhibited the prophecy itself, in a clearer light, and given it a more convincing efficacy. Of these the Reverend Mr. Schmucker, has availed himself; his knowledge of the subject, and his piety, will strike every reader. Bengelius, he most prefers, whose discrimination and pungency are seen in his Gnomon. Mr. Schmucker's Prophetic History, &c. merits, and it is hoped, will receive the attention and gratitude, both of the Student, and the Christian.

JAMES P. WILSON, D. D.

Pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia.

ROBERT CATHCART, D. D.

Pastor of the Presbyterian Congregation of York-Town.

*My Dear Friend and Brother,*

You have been so good as to send me the manuscript of your work, entitled "Prophetic History," &c. I had not time to read the whole of it; but what I did read, pleased me much. I have no doubt of its being a useful work, and have no hesitation in recommending it to the public. May your labours in the Vineyard of the Lord, not be in vain! And may this work of yours, be the means, in the hands of Providence, to bring many to the knowledge of the Lord Jesus, and to strengthen the faith of the weak.

Yours sincerely,

GEORGE LOCHMAN, A. M.

Minister of the Lutheran Church in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, and  
President of the German Lutheran Synod of Pennsylvania.

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BALTIMORE, Nov. 20, 1816.

*Reverend Sir,*

I have attentively read your Exposition of the Apocalypse. The new plan which you have adopted to elucidate the Prophetical Chronology, is a proof of ingenuity and deep research. Every attempt, by a discerning mind, to explain this prophetic Book, which certainly is drawing near its fulfilment, deserves commendation. Your readers will be gratified with many historical facts, and pious reflections.

I sincerely wish the public may be favoured with a continuation of this interesting work, and solicit you to lose no time in its completion.

I am, very respectfully,

Yours, &c.

DANIEL KURTZ, D. D.

Minister of the Lutheran Congregation in the city of Baltimore.

*Reverend Sir,*

I have only had time to take a cursory view of the work of the Reverend Mr. Schmucker, which you were so good as to put into my hands; and consequently, I am not able to speak with confidence of its merit. But it appears to me to be a performance of great ingenuity, and deep research. Whether he has discovered the true key to the Revelation of St. John, I would not venture to say; but his arguments and illustration, seem to throw additional light on this difficult subject.

I am, Reverend Sir,

Yours, &c.

JAMES KEMP, D. D.

Bishop of the Protestant Episcopal Church of Maryland!

Doctor KURTZ.,

TO THE REVEREND

**J. HENRY CH. HELMUTH, D. D.**

*Senior Reverendi Ministerii of the Evangelic Lutheran Church, and Minister of the Gospel at Philadelphia.*

DEAR SIR,

To live retired from the bustle of the world has always been my delight, and the study of the Holy Scriptures my greatest pleasure; ever since I had the honour of studying divinity under your care, and of being inducted a fellow labourer by you, into the vineyard of our Lord. Many of my leisure hours from official duty, have particularly been devoted to a more close investigation of the prophecies and their completion. The Apocalypse of St. John had long been impenetrable to my view, and the authors

which I read on that subject, left me in doubt and perplexity. But at last I obtained an insight, which to me appears fully satisfactory. My eye was attracted by the true key to this Divine treasure—A prophetic chronology, or calculation of the different denominations of time in this book, not yet noticed by the writers on this subject. By this key the whole number of predictions arrange themselves into a long chain, shewing the beginning, connexion and length of every link, and the extent of the whole system. My joy was truly great, when by the help of this key, I compared the prophecies with history;—conviction broke in on the mind like a torrent—doubt and hesitation disappeared. The light, which has discovered itself to me; the conviction which it afforded my mind, of the credibility of the gospel; the confident rest in our glorious and ever blessed Redeemer, with which I was comforted; may, under the Divine auspices of an all ruling Providence, also convince and comfort others. These are my motives, my object and apology for publishing this small



work on the Revelation ; though I confess, I do it with unaffected diffidence, when I consider the high importance of my subject, and my own fallibility.

I rejoice at this opportunity to make you a public tender of the gratitude of my heart, for the many favors which you have bestowed on me, during an uninterrupted friendship of twenty-four years. Be assured, sir, I should suspect my own heart, if among the many pupils, which you so successfully prepared for the gospel ministry in the Evangelic Lutheran Church in this country, there was one, who actually entertained more respect for your character, and a higher esteem for your inestimable labours in the Lord. It will continue to be a large part of my earthly happiness, to enjoy your friendship, your counsel, your confidence and comfort, during the shadowy path of my life through the valley of this world ; as I often ask myself in cases of difficulty, how you would prebably act in the same situation, and still look up to you as an example, worthy the imitation of all your brethren.

You will excuse the liberty I have taken of publishing this treatise under your name and protection; which I hope may not be displeasing to you. It is not that I think any name of renown will screen the faults that may be found in it; but in order that it may find unprejudiced minds, and may not be condemned without a reading—especially in those parts, which might be branded with the terrible imputation of novelty.

I have the honour to be,

Rev'd Sir,

Your attentive fellow servant, in  
the kingdom and patience of Jesus.

J. GEORGE SCHMUCKER.

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## PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS.

**THE** christian world has arrived at a very portentous period, full of great and alarming events. Most persons of reflection will allow, from the interesting and awful scenes carried on in the most civilized countries, that the end of the present form of civil and ecclesiastical economy is near at hand. 1 Pet. iv. 7.—1 Cor. x. 11.—Every century has been characterized by a peculiar spirit of its own, modelling every thing, more or less, in a new mould, and often making inroads, even into the sanctuary of the Lord. But the spirit of the present time stands distinguished from all former periods, by a character of peculiar innovation in church and state. No doubt these singular events, so unparralleled in the page of history, are, according to certain prophecies both in the Old and New Testament, yet only the prognostics of a scene of things still more extraordinary, and resolved upon in the councils of the Most High.

Behold the spirit of the nineteenth century ! It rose up like a lion, in the midst of a grazing flock—displeased with every thing, which did not bear its own image. When it first appeared towards the close of the last century, boasting of reason, philosophy and a discovery of the fatal consequences of superstition, it obtained many votaries ; but when it assumed the garb of the rights of man, it was hailed by millions. Its triumph seemed more certain every day, until it was perceived by the wise and considerate, that its final aim was, to establish infidelity, and make the world a general plunder and a wreck. And alas ! Their anticipation of ensuing horror proved too true. Every enclosure was broken down—the stately



edifices of former centuries demolished ; all christendom shivered at its approach, as in the presence of a being from the other world. The rulers of the earth began to lose the balance of government, against the internal weight of state ; their kingdoms were threatened with destruction, like decayed castles at the approach of a storm. Battles were fought, cities and kingdoms won or lost, kings degraded or restored ; and all the splendid ranks and orders of men, that supported them, extinguished or established. Whole countries were turned into a slaughter house, where the unburied bones of thousands yet lie bleaching, and whiten those fields, so lately smoking with human gore. Millions of souls have rushed from the field of battle, in a few years, into the world of spirits ; angels bemoan their untimely end with compassion, and would fain comfort the widow and the fatherless.

These awful scenes touch every trembling fibre of sensibility—the heart sickens in contemplating the misery of millions, and the subterraneous waves of this vast ocean of nations, are not yet commanded to rest. The prime cause of all this evil was infidelity, the partizans of which marshalled themselves in the order of the *Illuminati*. This numerous society first formed and propagated itself in the secret lodges, and under the garb of freemasonry, since the middle of the last century ; but soon assumed the names of almost every other society, to carry on its diabolical designs, and extend its banners into all the countries of Europe and America. The dark plans of this *order* are not even yet fully developed. That murderous revolution in France, was the first fruit of their exertions ; whose leaders apostatized from christianity, and unblushingly, in the most public manner, avowed Atheism ; whilst the inferior adherents exhibited scenes of contempt and aversion to the very name of Christ. The lurking places of these monsters of unrighteousness, are not yet deserted ; they still go on, to poison the sources of education, and to persuade

the world, that the restraints of religion and civil government, are but an intolerable imposition; endeavouring thereby to undermine the very pillars of civil society.—To this purpose thousands of books were circulated, written by men of the first talents, in a most subtle and artful manner, to unhinge public opinion, and make it run with loose reins through every field of moral science. Their success was astonishing, even to themselves. So corrupted is the present state of the world; so panting the vitiated heart of man for liberty, to follow its depraved inclinations without restraint or remorse; that in France, no less than twenty thousand new proselytes were made in one year. From this we may guess at their progress in other countries, and know the fountain of that insatiable thirst, in our days, for lawless liberty, as the right of man.

Political confusions naturally produce moral corruption. The religious institutions became involved in the fate of the kingdoms and empires, in which they had been established. In France and Germany the Church of God presents little more, than the fragments of a mighty wreck. We may reasonably conclude from this state of the christian world, that peace and happiness cannot be of long duration, where the sunshine of religious hope and comfort has vanished; where truth is controverted with all the charms of wit and elegance; the honour of christianity insulted; and the shadowy path of life made dreary and dismal, by doubt and despair. Its natural course would work the dissolution of all civil society, without a special interference of Providence in behalf of his church. But no, the world was not made to be the prey of infidels; God suffers them to bring judgment on themselves, that they may either turn to their Father, or work their own destruction. Many thousand learned and serious christians this day read the prophecies, to know the probable future prospects of church and state; and to those a treatise on this subject cannot fail to be welcome.

The study of the prophecies and their accomplishments in the signal events of past ages, is, more or less, the duty of every christian. But it is no less incumbent on us also, attentively to consider those predictions, which may now be in a train of fulfilment ; particularly when the signs of the times seem very interesting, and indicative of great peril and temptation. The Word of God is an important treasure indeed. We are not only assured by it in general, that the grace and faithfulness of the Lord shall never fail ; but we are there also provided with particular instructions, annexed to each prophecy, by which believers may know their duty in every state of trial and discipline to which they may be exposed. In this the provident care and kindness of God, has ever been apparent. The attacks of our enemies are often powerful, concealed, and subtle ; and we are in need of superior direction for our defence ; here then divine advice straightens our path, and supplies the deficiency.

I. It is therefore incumbent on the people of God, with the faithful Bœreans, to search the Scriptures, that they may know the signs of the times, and observe the particular instructions given them for each period. To this they are animated and directed in those prophetic declarations, as the most wise and certain rule of conduct for their safety and happiness. The secret things belong unto the Lord our God ; but those things which are revealed belong unto us, and to our children forever, that we may do them : Deut. xxix. 29. When you see these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads ; for your redemption is drawing nigh : Luke xxi. 28.

2. Prophecies reach but to the grave ; all their contents only affect and concern the living ; they are objects of faith, to excite our attention to Providence, and to the Holy Scriptures. For here we walk by faith, and there by sight. II. Cor. v. 7. As all are more deeply interested, it becomes all seriously to consider, and carefully to compare the

signs of the times, with the prophecies of Christ and his inspired servants. Not only the watchmen on the walls of Zion should feel concerned, to form correct ideas of the prophetic declarations ; but all, who may be taken unawares, as a thief in the night. The children of God will always have their share in the sufferings, inflicted on an unbelieving world. They shall be purified and tested ; but the wicked shall not understand, and shall fall, by thinking themselves secure and strong, without knowing their weakness and danger. Dan. xii. 10.

III. Our Lord reprov'd the Jews of his days, for not taking notice of the prophecies then receiving their completion before their eyes. "O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky and of the earth, but can ye not discern the signs of the times?" Matth. xvi. 3. He charges his disciples, John xvi. 14. "These things have I told you, that when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them." "For false Christs and false prophets shall rise, and shall shew signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect." Mark xiii. 22.

IV. The beloved apostles of Christ, believed it a duty incumbent on them, to give solemn warning to the churches of perilous times and great temptation ; wherefore they often speak of the latter times. Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, "that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils." 1 Tim. iv. 1. and 2 Tim. iii. 1. "This know also, that in the latter days, perilous times shall come." And 2 Pet. ii. and Jude 17. these apostles speak in the same manner concerning the last times, as being dangerous, and give forewarning of heretical doctrines, which should then be brought in by false prophets. 2 Pet. iii. 1—4. "This is the second epistle I now write to you, that you may be mindful of the words, which were spoken before, by the holy prophets : that there shall come in the last days scoffers, saying, where is the promise of his coming?" And



2 Thess. ii. 5. "Remember ye not, that I told you these things, when I was yet with you." And St. John says, 1 Epist. ii. 18. "Ye have *heard*, that Antichrist shall come," chap. iv. 2. "Ye have heard, that the spirit of Antichrist shall come." From these testimonies we may safely conclude, that the apostles gave solemn warning to the Christians of their days generally, of perilous times, both in public discourses and private converse; exhorting every one, carefully to discern and compare the signs of the times with the prophecies, and to observe their duty. Though we ought always, to consider it our first obligation, to seek the kingdom of God, and his righteousness—to be reconciled through the blood of the everlasting covenant; yet, if the apostles believed it necessary for the Christians of their days, to consider this word of prophecy, how much more will it be our duty, who live in those very times—in the last and most perilous part, of which they have spoken.

V. Of all the books of the New Testament, the Revelation is alone expressly prophetic, and prefaced with this animating admonition: "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things, which are written therein; for the time is at hand." Repeatedly we are called upon throughout this whole prophecy; "he that hath an ear, let him hear—let him, that readeth understand—blessed is he, that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book—seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book." Here then it is made our solemn duty and interest, to attend to the words of the prophecy, and their accomplishment in the signs of the times, more particularly to the Revelation.

The Revelation of St. John has in all ages of the Christian æra, been the wonder and mystery of the world. Its language and style, constructed on the symbolic principles of the ancient hieroglyphics, replete with sublime and figurative terms, will always fill the mind with amazement. The deep interest of all in these predictions, concerning the



prosperous and calamitous events of the church, and of those kingdoms and empires connected with her, attracts the attention of the thoughtful in an imperious manner to the sense, which these lofty images are intended to convey. Great minds are naturally inclined to inquire into objects of importance, however intricate or profound they may be; and here they were presented with a world of matter, which will employ all their powers in its investigation.

This subject however, has always proved to be an arduous undertaking. It is certainly of all scriptural prophecies the most intricate, and the most difficult to explain. We have many works extant, in every language of christendom, on this important revelation of Jesus Christ to his church. And though I feel a sincere respect for the learned labours of those profound scholars, both professional divines and laymen; yet I humbly conceive, only a few of those authors, have written from an entire conviction of the truth and certainty of their own explanations, and to the satisfaction of judicious readers. It was not for want of abilities, natural or acquired, that those great and good men remained in the morning dawn of light. The signs of the times had not yet appeared, which have since thrown more light on some of the principal prophecies, by which others of inferior magnitude are regulated, as to the time and manner of their completion.

The Lord has caused a cloud of obscurity to rest on this book, in order to hide his eternal counsels from the scrutinous eye of vain curiosity. Its profound contents are surely a river of living water, flowing from the throne of God; where a lamb may drink and be satisfied, and where the stature of an elephant would be insufficient to pass over. As all souls are his, Ezek. xviii. 4. He has also in this memorial of his love provided nourishment, comfort and advice for all; whatever their different states and ages in grace may require. 1 John ii. 12—13. The Epistles to the seven churches in Asia minor, are easy to be understood, and

have been of general utility to many souls. How often have they roused the lukewarm, confirmed the pious, and strengthened the weak! Even Martyrs have called them to remembrance, as matter of great comfort in their dying agonies, under the axe, the cross, and the stake.

This degree of obscurity, which attends the major part of the Revelation, proceeds in some measure, from the nature and circumstances of prophecy; and partly from the highly figurative language, in which the prophecies are conveyed. In some parts of this book, it may also proceed from the spiritual sense of the letter, referring to objects in the invisible world, above the sphere of our comprehension.

The language is hieroglyphic and emblematical. By using this expression, I do not mean to conduct my readers to the secret language of the Egyptian priests, who governed both church and state, and kept their records, in delineated characters, drawn from the figures of animals, or other objects in nature to express their ideas, which none except themselves understood. They retained this mode of writing from a high reverence for Hermes Trismegistus, who, they say, was the inventor of it; and whose disciples they acknowledged themselves to be. In the same manner as the Roman Catholics retain the Latin language; the Nestorians and Monophysites; the Syriac; the modern Egyptians; the Coptic; the Abyssinians; the Ethiopic, as the languages of worship and religion; because they had become sacred among them, by being in use for many centuries.

No, the symbolic is not exclusively the style of the Egyptians. It never claimed Egypt for its fountain head; since the Egyptian hieroglyphics in general, bear little resemblance to those of other nations, and therefore ought not to be explained solely from that source. It is the style of all Asia; the most ancient literature; and we may say, the language of nature. Every thing in antiquity was symbo-

lic and allegorical; and this style delights the imagination, pleases and improves the mind of even the weakest capacities, more than any other. A lion, is the hieroglyphic of strength and fortitude; a steer of agriculture; a horse, of liberty and speed; a sceptre, of royalty; an eye, of the Deity; a serpent, in a circle with variegated spots, of the universe. So the symbol of two hands united, signifies peace, darts, denote war; and the lines which joined these figures, express short words and phrases.

Besides this simple mode of hieroglyphics, the Asiatics also had a mixed sort of emblematical representation of enlarged and extensive import; by which they implied whole countries, kingdoms, empires, and the character of nations, religions and governments. They would draw a compound figure, from the outlines of different animals or other objects in nature, to express historical facts, or convey information of doctrines and morals. Thus the principal characters of church and state, are called by the names of the heavenly luminaries; empires, kingdoms and republics, are signified by mountains, hills and islands; all mankind, by the ocean; and commotions of nations, by the waves of a tempestuous sea, or by the eclipses and extinctions of celestial bodies. Of all the prophets, St. John makes the most frequent use of this language in his Revelation.

But besides this emblematical style in a general view, the natural signification of many words in this prophecy alludes to customs, tenets, and manners of times and places of remote antiquity; which are now either obliterated by time, or rarely understood, except by men versed in that kind of literature. By far the greater part of the figures, and images of the Revelation, are borrowed from the sacred writings of the prophets; particularly of those, who have written during the captivity of the Jews, and since their return to the holy land. At the waters of Babylon, the Israelites had access to the religious and philosophical tenets of Chaldean wisdom; where Daniel held the first sta-

tion, as chief of the Magi, the wise men of the East. The nation returned to their own land, strongly tinctured with the Chaldean tenets, customs and character; and those born in the land of captivity, had entirely lost the language of their ancestors, and almost the spirit of Moses; viewed every thing with Chaldean eyes, and touched the holy vessels with Chaldean hands. This change of the nation also had a great influence on the style, and manner of expression of the latter prophets. The style of Daniel is wholly Chaldean, and part of his book in that dialect. The visions of Ezekiel, which he saw at the river Chebar, are descriptive of the situation of those countries. And the views and figures of Zechariah, accord with the Chaldean customs and character.

When St. John wrote the Revelation, the walls of nations had been broken down by the Romans, and the different religious opinions and philosophical tenets of every country within their grasp, were perfectly afloat. From the river Cyrus, to the Nile; from the Caucasus to the Alps, all was an ocean of floating ideas, tenets, customs, dialects, and languages. Judea in particular stood in connexion with the *sebomenois* with the scattered Hellenistic Jews, from Egypt to the Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and Mesopotamians, Acts ii. 9, 10, 11; who from time to time brought home, and blended with their own, the languages, rites, opinions and fictions of other nations. The Asiatics began since Alexander's time, to speak the Greek language; but they only made it the vehicle of oriental ideas. The religious tenets of Zoroaster, the great reformer of Sabæism, among the Medes and Persians, which Cyrus brought with him to Babylon, when he established his empire there; had swayed the sceptre for many centuries, in conjunction with the wisdom of Chaldæa, from the Araxas to the Mediterranean sea. This mixture of religious tenets, and rites of worship, assumed the Hellenistic form, under the Grecian kingdoms in Asia; and the doctrines of the oriental



sages, furnished the ground works to the Jewish Cabbala, the Platonic philosophy, and at last to the Gnostic sect. What a powerful and extensive influence all these sources of knowledge had on the Greek language, during the time of all these political changes, must be obvious to every discerning mind. The words remained Greek, but the style of this language in Asia; the meaning and signification of words, became in a great measure Asiatic.

For this reason, the language of the New Testament, and more particular that of the Revelation, cannot be Athenian; and therefore the first and natural signification of its words should only be studied from pure Grecian authors; but more especially their sense and meaning from Asiatic writers, who have lived and written in the same countries with the apostles. Such a critical knowledge of this language, as spoken and understood in Asia, would make a successful expositor of many passages of the New Testament, which have hitherto remained obscure, and doubtful. For it is a monument, which evidently bears the marks of that time, and the evidence of the different manner of thought and use of words in Asia, from writers in Europe. How much more Asiatick for instance, are the epistles of Paul to the Ephesians and Colossians, than those which he has written to the Romans and Corinthians? His epistle to the scattered Hebrews, is a living memorial of their manner of thought and method of teaching. The language of St. John in the first chapters of his Gospel, and more especially in the Revelation, is altogether Asiatic. He lived in Ephesus, then a centre point of the remains of the Persian and Chaldaean philosophy, and the followers of John the Baptist; and from those sources, as well as from the writings of the prophets, the style of the Revelation, and the current signification of his words must be studied.

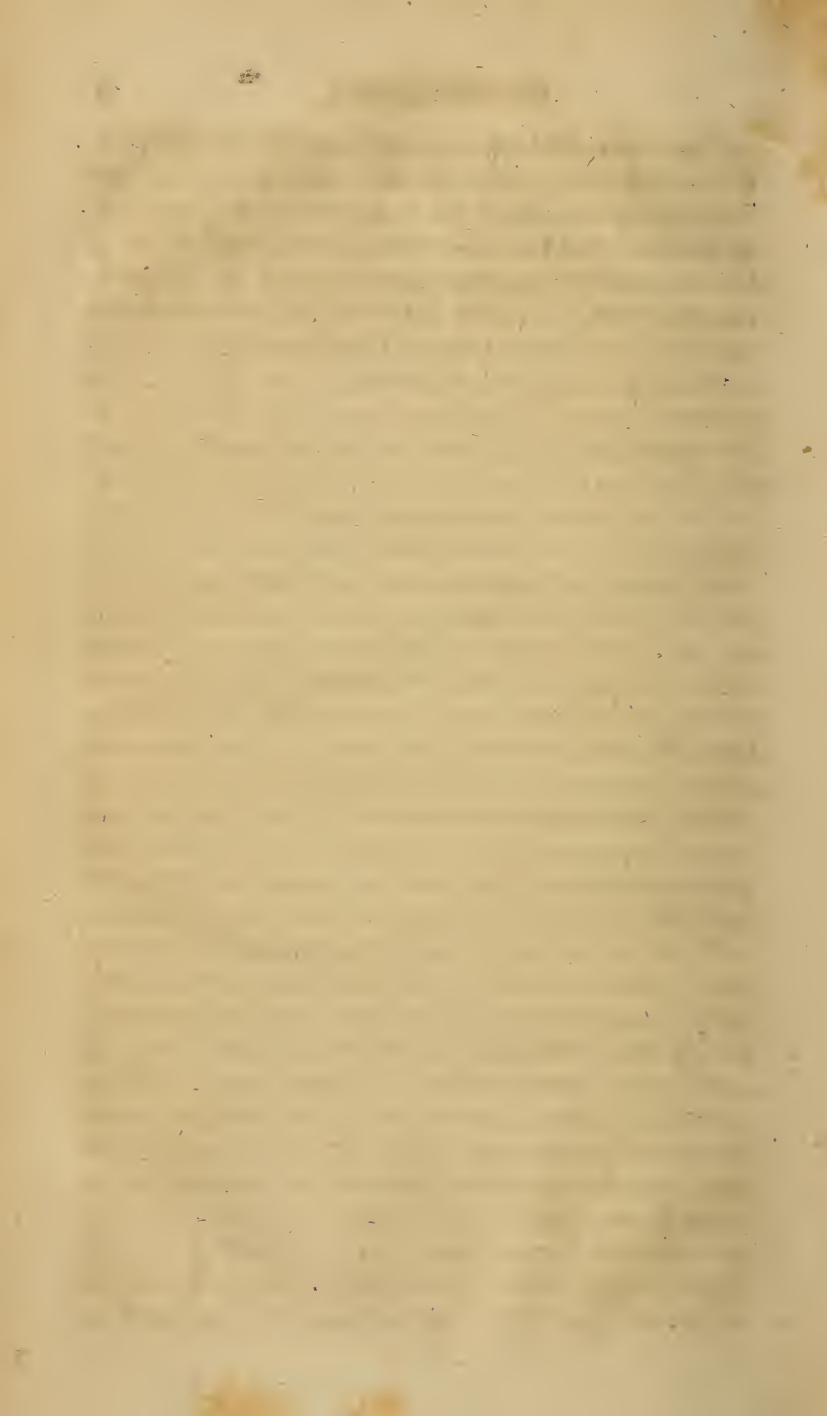
But the obscurity of the Revelation also proceeds from the nature and circumstances of prophecy itself; for which many reasons might be assigned, to evince the divine wis-

dom, displayed in accomplishing his eternal councils on earth. A certain degree of obscurity is necessary to some prophecies, in order to prevent the enemies of the Lord, from a discovery of his plan of proceeding. In case of a disclosure before their accomplishment, the voluntary instruments of wrath might shrink back, and delay the designs of heaven; the great enemy of man might change his measures; and the agents in Zion disorder their aid, and lose their reward by precipitancy and pride. It is even impossible that those prophecies, relative to events still future, should be clear. For some of the principal outlines, and many of the particular circumstances, which throw most light on the accomplishment, so as to identify the prediction, do not yet exist. We may form a general idea by them, of the designs of Heaven, and more would little contribute to our happiness. If we could not understand their general tenor, why would the Lord reprove the Jews of his days, for their ignorance and want of discernment. Daniel understood those of Jeremiah, concerning the end of the captivity of the Israelites at Babylon: and the Scribes, those of Micah, where the Messiah should be born, and told it to Herod. A full insight into the particular circumstances of their completion, is intended only for cotemporary believers; who will also stand in need of additional strength, for the severe contest of those days.

This obscurity no doubt, proceeds from consummate wisdom and a most benevolent intention towards man. It induces the children of God, to implore the Father of light for the illumination and wisdom from above; it excites curiosity, industry, and attention to the Word of God; convinces proud reason of its ignorance in matters of a divine nature, that we may humble ourselves before him; and prevents disgust and weariness in the study of these divine oracles. All these objects would not have been obtained, if the language of prophecy had been clear, and in words of a more obvious signification.



A great part of the Revelation is now fulfilled, and a sufficient acquaintance with history, and the language and style of prophecy, is all that is necessary, in order to understand it. But the time is near at hand, when this Book, by a most evident accomplishment of some of its principal predictions, will prove to be the greatest comfort and treasure of the whole church of Christ on earth.



## INTRODUCTION.

The calculation of prophetical time is of the greatest importance in explaining the Revelation. It is even impossible without this knowledge, either to arrange the different prophecies contained in this book, into their genuine order; or to shew their accomplishment with certainty, and to the satisfaction of judicious readers. We often meet with it here, even more frequently than in all the rest of the prophetic writings of the Old Testament. If the computation of an expositor is erroneous in principle, or defective in its progression, he will necessarily deceive himself and others, by applying the prophecies to events, which infinite wisdom never intended them to signify. Hence many able and good men have failed in their conjectures, by trusting too much to the strength of their own understanding; and injudicious enthusiasts, neglecting to improve on those parts already accomplished, have attempted to dive into futurity, and alarmed the world by a false interpretation of times and events, as if God designed to make them prophets. Such proceeding is daring and impious. For when the events prove the falsity of their predictions, a part of the contempt and ridicule, which so deservedly fall on the author of them, will also bring the Word of God into disrepute with the ignorant. Hence that guilty backwardness of many in our days, to study this book at all, and to apply these strong holds of faith, contained therein, to the advancement of the church, of which in our days of infidelity she stands so much in need.

The prophet Daniel was expressly commanded to shut up and seal (conceal the sense of) his prophecy, relative

to the suffering state of the church in the latter time. He has however given us a series of prophetic numbers, to compute the long interval of time, between the date of his prophecy and its final accomplishment ; if we have the key to unlock this divine treasure, which we are directed in confidence to expect in due season. It is promised, the industrious searcher of the prophetic word, Chap. xii. 4. "*Many shall run to and fro, read and study the prophecies, desirous of knowledge and comfort in those days of peril, and knowledge shall be increased.*" But St. John was interdicted in direct terms to do so. Rev. xxii. 10. "And he saith unto me, seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book ; for the time is at hand." Rev. i. 3. "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of the prophecy." The Revelation therefore, notwithstanding the height and depth of its prophetic contents, is yet of such a nature, that it may, and shall be understood. It is not a sealed book, covered over with an impenetrable cloud ; no, it is an Apocalypsis, a Revelation, a discovery of Jesus Christ to his servants ; a commentary on the prophecies of the Old Testament, and a key to the disclosure of its prophetical time, concerning the gospel dispensation.

But perhaps some of my readers may have a conscientious scruple, to enter into investigations of this kind. They believe to have found a prohibition to all calculations of this nature in that memorable passage. Matt. xxiv. 36. Where the Son of God says : "But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, neither the Son (Mark xiii. 32) but my Father only." This passage truly has the appearance of a negative prohibition. But the Lord cannot allude here to the destruction of Jerusalem ; for he has determined the time of that catastrophe, to take place before that generation should pass away, and repeatedly advised his disciples to escape, and save themselves by flight, which they actually did. Neither can these words apply to our Lord's second advent, at the approach of the

Millennium; for also this period is determined by limits and numbers, both in Daniel and the Revelation. Our Lord then actually here refers to what the disciples originally inquired after, namely, the end of the world. Now of this period our Lord and Saviour saith: neither He, nor the angels had any special knowledge, as to the day and hour. But this he spoke of his mediatorial character, and even in that respect, it was only the case during his pilgrimage on earth. He is now exalted to the right hand of the eternal Father, and has opened the book of seven seals, in which all the councils of the Almighty are disclosed to his view, concerning the plan of government in his Church and the consummation of all things.

The apostles in a general meeting, inquired of the Lord after his resurrection, saying, "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" And He said unto them, "it is not for you to know, (chronous or kairous) limited terms or times, which the Father hath determined in his own authority." This answer has also been urged as a general interdiction to all inquiries of this sort; although it is limited by the very words, only to the apostles, ἐχ ὑμῶν ἐστι (sc. ἔργον) γινῶναι non est vestrum (opus) scire; it does not belong to your ministry and time to know, χρόνους ἢ καιροὺς, ye shall be witnesses unto me, to the uttermost part of the earth. But the Lord does not deny in these words, that it is the duty of others who live after the time of the apostles, to know these limited terms and times. He rather asserts it, by distinguishing between those who ought, and who ought not to make it their business to inquire. No, if the original is closely inspected, the words of the Lord will yet prove an answer to the inquiry of the apostles. They had used the word, χρόνος, time, in the singular number, and no doubt also in its common acceptance; but the Lord answers in the plural, and with an emphatical difference of the words, χρόνους ἢ καιροὺς; and these epochs and times are enigmatical expressions in his



lips, denoting limited times and periods, the length of which will hereafter be determined.

Prophecies are objects of faith, whether they relate to time, place, or events; and it is equally laudable to credit one and the other, on the authority of God. The ancient patriarchs could not wait in expectation of the promised Messiah, without conjecture as to the time of his coming; or unless they also believed the prediction concerning the time of his appearance in the flesh? When the Lord promised Sarah a son in a short time, would it have been proper in her, to confide in this divine declaration only concerning the son, and not also as to the time of his birth? If Hezekiah had only believed the promise of his recovery, and under a pretence of modesty, not of the fifteen years also, which the Lord added to his days, his gratitude would no doubt have been defective. If the men of Nineveh had only believed the prophecy of Jonah, concerning the destruction of their city, and not likewise relative to the forty days, their repentance would surely have been far less prompt and ardent than it was. When the noble Lord in Samaria, would not believe Elisha concerning the great plenty in twenty-four hours, his unbelief cost him his life. 2 Kings vii. 1. Had the Israelites at Babylon not been attentive to the seventy years of their captivity, foretold by Jeremiah, they would either by impatience have brought themselves into troubles while there, or probably never have returned to the land of promise from Chaldæa. It is even more congenial to our age in grace, under the gospel dispensation, that our faith should comprise the whole Word of God; and not neglect any part, which the Lord may have judged proper, (*semel pro semper*) to reveal to his Church.

The way being thus prepared, I shall now speak more directly to the professed point of my subject. But before I explain that highly probable system of prophetic chronology, discovered by that learned and pious prelate Ben-



gelius, A. D. 1742, which is now generally received and followed in Germany; it will be necessary for the reader to observe, what I would presume a grand mistake in some of the beloved Apocalyptical systems of our days. This error consists in taking *a day in the Revelation to signify a year*. It is argued from the following passages, that days, mean years: Numbers xiv. 33, 34. Ezekiel iv. 5, 6. Daniel ix, 24, 25, 26. Luke xiii. 33; and these proofs are strong and conclusive evidence, of this having been an ancient mode of calculation; but it certainly would be a weak and premature conclusion, to say, that hence it must also be followed in the Revelation of St. John? No, the contrary is evident from the following reasons.

I. The defenders of this mode of calculation confuse the whole internal order and method of this book, which in itself is more regularly written, to assist our weak understanding, than any other scriptural prophecy. Some throw its whole contents into seven periods, so that each period shares one of the seals, one trumpet and one vial; and all the rest of heterogeneous matter is forced into them, as into a case of drawers, wherever it may suit. Others, to uphold their beloved system of calculation, have rent the prophecy in two, and begin anew with the twelfth chapter and the birth of the man-child. This proceeding is arbitrary and unwarrantable: the Word of God deserves to be studied with more deference and respect. It is not with the Revelation as with other prophecies, where perhaps you may say, the method and style is not of divine origin; for here the order and method of the whole vision is not to be ascribed to the manner or choice of the apostle. He has written it, as it was emblematically exhibited to him from that heavenly book with seven seals, of which, even as to order and method, the Apocalypse is a copy.

II. If a day be taken for a year, the times of the three woes alone, will amount to sixty months, or eighteen hun-

dred years. Where will room be found for all the events, which are to proceed the first woe? for the three different cessations or pauses, which the text calls for, before the first, second and third woes? for those events in the third woe, which are to take place both before and after the forty-two months of the power of the beast? and for the important contents of the xx. chapter? It would be incompatible with the express words of the prophecy, to let either of these woes run parallel to each other, for any space of time. The effects of the first woe must necessarily have ceased, at least in the church, before the second can begin; and so the second, before the commencement of the third; though they may continue in other parts of the world. Chapt. ix. 12. xi. 14.

III. How could the Devil's stay on earth be called a *short time*, which yet begins a considerable time before the forty-two months of the beast, and only closes some time after it is destroyed, if these forty-two months, amount to twelve hundred and sixty years? Surely, this *short time* of his continuance on earth, cannot be as long, as the following one thousand years of his confinement in the bottomless pit? The expression, "a short time," is certainly a comparative form of language, to which the positive must somewhere be found. And why would these two numbers, relative to the same object, be expressed in this manner; if the diminutive and undetermined number, was not to be compared to the following one settled and fixed? The very first sight of them ought to strike conviction into every mind, and no doubt, if closely examined, will prove the inconsistency of the *yearly day* in this place.

IV. The advocates for the *yearly day*, have thrown the forty-two months of the beast, the twelve hundred and sixty days of the witnesses, the twelve hundred and sixty days and the time, times and half a time of the woman, all into one calamitous epoch of twelve hundred and sixty years; for which at last they have neither a certain, nor a

suitable commencement. Before the year A. D. 1736, they mostly dated from A. D. 476, and some even before that year : but since nothing remarkable has terminated that period, they have begun to change to later dates, still less remarkable on the page of history, and of course less probable to begin so important a train of events. Late writers have since adopted the dates A. D. 500, and 606, when the emperor Phocas, declared the bishop of Rome universal bishop. But the first foundation for the papal power and grandeur, had been laid before that time ; the emperor's declaration gave this title little or no effect, for the Eastern churches never consented to this decree.

V. Another argument against the yearly day, is the *measure* used in the Revelation, chapter xxi. which is evidently different from that of Ezekiel xl. This difference grounds a supposition, that the mode of calculation here, may also be of a peculiar form, different from that in the Old Testament.

VI. He who minutely studies chap. xiii. of the Revelation, with all the attention it so well deserves, will there meet with a new key, for the computation of the prophetic times, peculiar to this prophecy ; which certainly would not have been given, if the ancient mode of calculation had been used by the spirit of prophecy in this book. This key only must be employed here, and no other will verify itself on the page of history ; as evinced by so many weak and inconclusive essays, where the authors, otherwise respectable, have followed an erroneous mode of calculation, and involved themselves in clouds and darkness, as well as the subject which they laboured to elucidate.

VII. The very title of this book, and the introduction to the seven churches indicate, that its peculiar contents convey something new and unknown before. It is a Revelation, a discovery of those unfathomable designs in the divine plan of government, reserved and hid from the foundation

of the world in the councils of the Almighty Ruler of the Universe. In such a work we may expect to find many things new; a new computation of time, and the promised key to the hidden numbers in Daniel; a new arrangement and method, in which important and numerous subjects are presented to the world: a new collection of the scattered rays of the Old Testament prophecies, relative to the church of Christ, more completely delineated and decked by the finishing hand, to answer the purposes of Heaven with his militant people on earth.

The Revelation contains two kinds of prophetic time, the one ordinary and methodical, and the other extraordinary; which last numbers are introduced to protract the periods of the first and methodical time, wherever they occur. Of the extraordinary time, that pious prelate Bengelius, has discovered the true length and duration; and the ordinary and methodical time, under which this series of prophecies arrangeth itself into one coherent system, is wholly my own. I shall first give an account of Bengelius's system, which he has rendered such eminent services to the church, and then illustrate the one I avow; since both schemes are necessary, in order to understand the Revelation, and used in the following treatise.

The prophetic times of the Revelation are either expressed by the same terms of natural time, although they are much longer as for instance, the forty-two months of the beast; or they are denominated by indeterminate terms, which yet have a certain duration here in the order of prophecies: as for instance, the time, times and half a time of the woman in the wilderness, and that period during which the souls under the altar were yet to rest, called a Chronos. But there are also natural times in this prophecy, which are not prophetic, to wit, the six hundred and sixty-six years of the power and duration of the beast, and the one thousand years of the Millenium on earth; both



are either expressly determined as such, or limited by circumstances, which will not admit them prophetic.

Now, we all know the length of natural time, and shall thereby be able to determine the periods of prophetic time, if a key be given, by which to find the proportion of the one to the other. This key must be somewhere in the Revelation. For if the true length of these times could not be, at least nearly determined, these numbers would be here to no purpose at all. The learned prelate Bengelius, found this key in the Chap. xiii. and if it is not there, it is no where else. There, the words of the fifth verse run thus: "*And power was given to Him (the beast) πολεμον ποιῆσαι bellum gerere, to make war forty and two months.*" According to the natural measure of time, this would be three years and a half; a time too short for this beast, to perform all ascribed to it by the prophecy. We must therefore take these forty-two months, to be a prophetic time. Now in the 18th verse of this chapter, we read these memorable words: "*Here is the wisdom—let him that hath understanding (ὁ ἔχων τὸν νοῦν, qui intelligentia est praeditus) count the number of the beast; for it is the number of man; and his number is six hundred threescore and six*"—i. e. these are the years of his reign, according to the natural manner of counting. As he who has judgment, is here advised to calculate by this number—and since the text expressly directs our attention to this number: *here is wisdom*; this passage most assuredly contains this key. And since the Orientals counted their year by the moon, this key will stand thus:

If forty-two prophetic months give six hundred and sixty-six lunar years, what will be a prophetic hour, a day, a week, a month, a year? For this number six hundred and sixty-six, cannot be taken to run parallel with the forty-two months, neither can it be considered as a protraction of that time; because in either case none of these two num-



bers could be compared with the other by calculation, as the spirit of prophecy here directs.

The solution of this problem produces the following aggregate, in which I shall not take notice of those divisions of time, less than a day,

<i>Prophetic time.</i>	<i>Common time.</i>
$\frac{1}{2}$ an hour chap. viii. 1. =	about 4 days.
1 hour chap. xiv. 15. =	8 days.
1 day . . . . . =	196 days.
1260 days chap. xii. 6. =	677 years, 97 days.
1 month chap. ix. 15. =	13 years, 318 days.
5 months . . . . . =	79 yrs. 19 wks. 1 day.
1 year . . . . . =	196 years 117 days.
1 h. 1 day, 1 m. 1 year =	212 years 275 days.

The learned prelate Bengelius, has also attempted to determine the length and duration of those indetermined terms of times, found in the Apocalypse, by a profound mathematical operation, which solves some of the most critical and intricate questions in Astronomy, concerning the revolutions of the Heavenly bodies; but to me, his solutions on this head, have always appeared too far fetched, fanciful, and defective in their application to the prophecies. Those who wish to examine him on this subject, and understand the German and Latin languages, may satisfy themselves, by reading his inestimable commentary on the Revelation of St. John; his Gnomon, and notæ in Apocalypsin; and his Cyclus, or singular investigation of the great year of the world. Bengelius is without doubt the most able expositor on this important book, of all German authors; and in my opinion the first of all I have read on this subject. His profound judgment, his extensive knowledge of history, and his great proficiency in every other branch of literature, requisite in order to understand this book, enabled him, although in want of the knowledge of the ordinary and methodical prophetic time in this prophecy, to strike the true point of accomplishment in very

many of these prophecies. And his expositions of those predictions, carry a degree of evidence, which forces the mind to acquiesce. The author of this treatise has availed himself, on many occasions, of his assistance, as well as of the exposition of Doctor Yung.

I will now attempt to illustrate my own system of prophetic chronology, concerning the ordinary and methodical times used by the spirit of prophecy in the Apocalypse; as also of those indetermined terms of time, in the limitation and adjustment of which, I humbly assume to differ from the decision of the great Bengelius. The author enters on this subject with unaffected diffidence—he treads on holy ground with awe. Yet a conscious rectitude of intention, a hope of obtaining the reader's indulgence, and a conviction of this subject, being peculiarly seasonable at this perilous time, have animated him in this undertaking, to which he otherwise avows himself unequal. He would therefore entreat all, who honour this treatise with any degree of attention, duly to consider his arguments on so important a subject. As he shall do little more, than draw the reader's mind to notice the internal method, and the contents of the Revelation itself, his authorities cannot be invalidated, if once firmly established.

The Apocalypse is a series of prophecies, arranged by the Divine hand into an admirable system, which constitutes it one great whole. It cannot be explained by detached pieces, like other prophetic books of the holy scriptures. Its general design must be known, the harmony of the different parts, and their dependence on each other understood, to warrant an author in this enterprise. No book of the Old or New Testament is so designedly written with art and wisdom, as to general method and adjustment of all its particular parts, as these sacred oracles; and this internal method of the prophecy itself, into which its whole contents are adjusted, *constitutes and expresses a*

*prophetic chronology*, or computation of times, and periods, in which these predictions are to meet their completion. Not only the contents of this book are prophetic, but also the *order* and *method* in which its contents are presented to us, is expressive of the times and periods of the church of Christ, under the New Testament dispensation. Some of my readers will take this, to be no more than a hypothesis as yet; however a series of signal events will soon convince them, that it is a well established truth.

The prelate Bengelius's system of calculation on the determined prophetic times, is neither erroneous nor defective; if those numbers which it comprises, are taken to be no more, than what the spirit of prophecy intended them to be, to wit, extraordinary numbers, to enlarge the methodical periods of time in this book. But if we attempt to arrange the whole series of prophecies by them, this system is certainly very imperfect, and by no means satisfactory to an inquisitive mind. It only touches some particular links in this extensive chain of predictions, and leaves all the rest without a proper chronological adjustment. Hence the learned prelate's system has neither a certain date; nor a perfectly important fact, from which to commence the train of accomplishments; and in all those points, which it does not immediately regulate and determine, there is too much room for the ingenuity of man. Although he has marked the greater part of the accomplishments of these prophecies with a lucky and firm hand; yet, by reason of these imperfections of his system of calculation, the mind will barely yield him a high degree of probability. They always induced me to search, in expectation of another key to a new system of prophetic time, as a main basis to the numbers of his computation. Such a one would be desirable and necessary, as would supply all those deficiencies, arrange the whole series of prophecies, shew the length of every link in this chain, the period of every prediction, in which it is to be accom-

plished, and determine its precise point of beginning and end; and such a one could not fail of producing effects, worthy of this Revelation. For it is the concatenation of a series of prophecies, and their completion in the signal events of many centuries, which furnishes an argument of such strength and force, as even to awe infidelity into silence and dismay. A system of prophetic chronology of this kind, the spirit of prophecy has certainly given somewhere, for it is promised in Daniel xii. and such a one, I humbly conceive to have discovered in the Apocalypse.

The general design of the Revelation is, a prophetic history of the triumph of the Christian Religion, or in other words, of the great conflict between the Redeemer of the world and the prince of darkness, from its commencement to its final termination. Every emblematical presentation in the order of the whole vision, has its appropriated place in this plan of action—and only there, and no where else will it meet its genuine completion. A prophetic chronology therefore, by which the whole series of predictions is arranged and adjusted in due order, must begin in the same moment of time, with the prophecy, otherwise its dates would not accord with the history of the church, and of nations. Most authors begin the accomplishment of these prophecies from the year '96, in which the apostle received the Revelation in the island of Patmos; but this is surely a mistake, for both the church and the great conflict commenced before that time. It would have been most agreeable, to affix the first link of this chain to the week of our Lord's passion; but it cannot be extended to that point. The prophecy itself also presupposes in its five first chapters, the Lamb of God as slain, and the seven churches in Asia minor as planted. Daniel affixes chapter ix. 26, 27. the final doom of his nation, to the expiration of his seventy weeks of years. There the church of the Old Testament had been visibly and forever razed and abolished; and precisely to the



year of the destruction of Jerusalem, A. D. '72, the prophetic chronology of the Apocalypse affixes its commencement.

I have no reason to fear a clashing of history with the dates of my computation—I only apprehend, my first principle will be found *too simple*, and *artless* with those, who perhaps have all this time been expecting, to meet with a concealed and profound system. But this simplicity and plainness ought not to be considered a defect; it should induce us more readily to receive it; for it is, no doubt, the will of God, that this important Revelation should be of benefit to all, as it imports all to know it; and that this calculation of prophetic time should be intelligible, even to the weakest capacity.

The seventh number has been consecrated as sacred, from the beginning of the world. And although infidelity has levelled many a sneer at it, yet in that measure of time, God finished the creation of heaven and earth. Moses and the prophets make a frequent use of it; and here in the Apocalypse, the frequent occurrence of this number, is even remarkable and striking. There can be no doubt, but it is a very secret, profound and important measure of time, since the whole economy of the Old Testament dispensation, both in its civil and ecclesiastical departments, was thereby regulated. The great Creator measures it out by the motions of the heavenly bodies; since this is the general valid measure of time in our solar system, by which, according to Bengelius, all their revolutions are determined without a fraction; from all of which we may safely conclude, that it has its sure foundation in the eternal councils of Heaven. The prophet Daniel has it in his seventy prophetic weeks, by which he determines the duration, and destinies of the Jewish church: and we have reason to believe, that it may also be the key-number to the times of the New Testament church, and that it may run on even to the consummation of all things.



An attentive reader of the Apocalypse, must at least, find it striking and remarkable, to meet so frequently with this number here. We read of seven spirits before the throne of God; of a Lamb, having seven horns and seven eyes; of seven Thunders; of a Dragon with seven heads; a beast, with seven heads, and one with the same number from the bottomless pit. But still more remarkable are the *seven* seals, the *seven* trumpets, and the *seven* vials, by which this series of prophecies is evidently arranged into a methodical order of time and periods. All these terms are surely founded on a certain measure of time, by which the prosperous and calamitous events of the church are limited to numbers and periods; and whoever discovers that measure, has found the key to a full assurance and certainty, in the exposition of this prophecy.

With this key I will acquaint my indulgent reader; though with all due deference to the judgment of the wise, the abilities of the able, and the labours of the learned. *It consists in a peculiar application of the (Hebdomadæ) prophetic weeks of Daniel, to the Apocalypse.* There are seven seals, and the seventh contains the seven trumpets. *Every seal and every trumpet, comprises a period of seven prophetic weeks, or forty-nine years; and the prophecy under these seals, discloses the most interesting and remarkable events, which are to happen to the church of Christ during that time.* This is signified by the *seventh number*. But since the Revelation contains the history of the triumphs of the Son of God, over the powers of darkness, the fiftieth year, or the year of Jubilee, should every time be counted in; which caused such remarkable Epochas in the Jewish church and state, Leviticus xxv. 27. The seventh seal however cannot, consistently with the order of the prophecy, be taken into the computation, for itself, as it comprises the seven trumpets; which are a new continuation of periods and events, of the same length with

the seals. And before the woes, three pauses of cessations must be admitted of which the third is of much shorter duration than the first and second, as expressly demanded by the words of the prophecy. At the beginning of the woes this prophetic chronology, moreover divides itself, by the internal order of the book, into *two remarkable columns*; one of which advances the lineage of the church of Christ, the other marks the progression of the woes, and their pauses of cessation. These two notable columns run on into the sound of the seventh trumpet, where again they furnish the exact dates, to a new succession of prophecies in four lines of periods and numbers, which are terminated by the seven vials, and the commencement of the happy Millennium. The reader perhaps may find this description dark and intricate, I will therefore give him a prospective view of this admirable fabric; the sight of which has brought full conviction to my mind, and comfort to my heart. Let serious and considerate lovers of the prophetic word, determine its real value.

But in order to complete the solution of this divine scheme, or internal prophetic chronology of this prophecy, we are yet to settle those terms of time, which we have denominated *indeterminate*. These are the times of the woman; the short time of the dragon; the little season of the souls under the altar; the time, to which the angel swore; and the little season, in which the Devil is loose again, after the thousand years. These are the terms of time, in the solution of which, I humbly presume to differ from the learned Bengelius, and many other authors on this important subject. The accomplishment alone, as recorded on the page of history, can determine between us, what degree of credibility may be due to each of our labours.

No doubt, all the periods of time, designated by these terms, have a reference to each other; and as they are all of the same indetermined kind, stand in a comparative re-

lation among themselves, as to the exact quantity of time belonging to each period. If therefore a key could be discovered to determine one period precisely; the whole number might be adjusted into a scale of time, at least highly probable, if not certain and conclusive. And as these times also stand connected with the whole body of prophecies, arranged by methodical periods, and extraordinary, determined numbers; their lengths are moreover regulated by circumstances, and the limits of others. I presume to have found this key in the periods of the methodical times, and after mature consideration formed the following scale, which is verified by history, and accords with the scheme and connection of the whole book. I take a hundred years to be *a time*, and fifty years to be *half a time*; as it is expressly laid in Genesis, chapter xv. 13, 16. That this is the time of man, and of a generation of men. See also, Job xlii. 16. Isa. xxxviii. 12. Where THORI signifies both.

I must however previously inform the common reader, that some of these terms of time, are very imperfectly translated in our English version. My scale will therefore exhibit them in the original language, and after an improved translation.

## SCALE OF TIME.

50 years,	ἥμισυς καιρὸς,	<i>half a time</i> of the woman. Chap. xii. 14.
100	καιρὸς	<i>a time.</i>
200	καιροί,	<i>times.</i>
350	καιρὸν, καὶ καιροῦς, καὶ ἥμισυ καιροῦ,	<i>A time; times and half a time.</i>
800	ὀλίγον καιρὸν	The original is not μικρὸν, <i>parvum</i> a little time, which would make it shorter than a whole time; it is ὀλίγον, <i>a few, not many</i> , and must be taken for a numerical word, to signify some times, but

## INTRODUCTION.

not many times, during which the dragon is to stay on earth. Chap. xii. 12.

950 years, μικρόν χρόνον, *A little epocha*, when Satan is loose again, after the Millennium. Chap. xx. 3.

1000 χίλια ἔτη, *A thousand years* common time, of the kingdom of Christ on earth. Chap. xx.

1078 ὅτι χρόνος οὐκ ἔσται ἔτι, *That it will not be a chronos more*, to the finishing of the mystery of God. Chap. x. 6.

1100 χρόναν, *Epocha*, during which the souls of the martyrs are to rest under the altar. Chap. vi. 2. Aliqui Codd. habent χρόνον μικρόν. Bengelius præfert χρόνον. Lectio μικρόν rejicitur.

The following treatise will shew, how well this measure of time verifies itself on the page of history. Some of these dates have already been proven by a most clear accomplishment of those prophecies, to which they stand connected; and others are now in a state of an inceptive fulfilment before our eyes; which raises the whole scale to at least, a high degree of probability. There is however one item in this rising series of time, which I suppose will meet with many objections. Those of my readers, who have already laid it down, as a settled point, that the duration of the world, or at least of this our solar system, is limited to 7000 years, will find that *little epocha*, during which Satan is set at liberty again, after the Millennium, very improbable. But when the Word of God is under consideration, all prejudices should be laid aside. The order of the book has placed it there—the spirit of prophecy has assigned it that space; and he is a teacher, whose instructions are entitled to unreserved consent. It is evident from



a multiplicity of expressions in the writings of the apostles, that the times of the New Testament will not be longer, than the times of the Old Testament. The disciples of our Lord often term them, “the latter *days*,” “the last *days*,” with other diminishing expressions annexed thereto, indicative of a shorter continuance in comparison with the time before the birth of Christ. St. John even calls it “the last *hour*.”\* But we are not only sure, that the time of the present ecclesiastical economy will not be more than the former one; we also have sound and substantial testimony, even the Word of God, to prove that the two points, the creation and consummation of the world, are at equal distances from the time of Christ’s death. The prophet Habakkuk, chap. iii. 2. Prophecy concerning the time of the first advent of our Lord, and of his great work of redemption, has these memorable words in the original: “*Thou revivest thy work in the midst of the ages of the world, in the midst of the ages of the world hast thou made it known.*†” And in the epistle of Paul to the Hebrews, chap. ix. 26. *But now once hath he appeared* ἐπὶ συντελείᾳ τῶν αἰώνων, *upon the confine of the ages of the world; or in the midst of the ages, in the second age of the world, or upon the confine of the ages of the Old and New Testaments; all which significations of this expression in the original Greek, upon the whole, are tantamount to the same object.*‡ I might produce more testimony in justification

\* 1 John xi. 18. Our English translation is incorrect in this place. The original is ὥρα, *hour*, twice, in the beginning and end of this verse, and not καιρός, *time*.

† Coccejus has it: *operatio tua est in medio annorum vita ejus, quem in medio annorum notificasti, aut cognoscendum proposuisti, qui ante finem anni prioris, ingruente anno alio, anno scilicet, acceptationis, et Christum cognoscendum proposuisti et ex mortuis excitasti.*

‡ Hoc accuratissime in tempus Messiae nostri congruit. Cum enim ille veniret, finis aderat τῷ HAVEH OLAM, (he was from eternity) et initium τῷ HABBA OLAM (he will be to eternity.) Igitur duo τέλη, duæ



of this point of doctrine, concerning the age of the world, where I write more expressly on this subject. But I will leave this matter here, and unfold that more interesting scheme of the Revelation itself.

Thus I have laid before my reader the proper and peculiar order of this book—the body and branches of this whole system of prophecies, as it presents itself to a discerning mind. In this symmetrical harmony of the different parts to the whole, the accomplishment of one series of prophecies commences after the other, and all go on in symphony, pause, rise again, and stop; as the different parts in a well performed piece of music, in order to produce a general effect on the trembling fibres of sensibility—so here on the states, kingdoms and empires of the world, as evinced by the seven trumpets.

As to the precise time, when the seven vials, containing the wrath of God against the worshippers of the beast, shall begin to be poured out, I am not perfectly certain; but when I consider the different stages of this prophecy, and the proportion of this part to the whole, I feel inclined to fix their commencement at the conclusion of the six hundred and sixty-six years of the power of the beast, For after the fifth vial, although his power is broken, and his kingdom full of darkness, yet it remains a kingdom, and its entire annihilation is reserved for the seventh vial, and the rage of the beast from the bottomless pit. However it appears from the description of his worshippers under the first vial, as if no *mark* or *image* of the beast, such as now exists was intended, but others more expressive, which the second beast from the earth will cause to be received, during the inaction of the first. Ne-

extremities et termini horum OLAMIM (to all eternity,) sive αἰώνων semet invicem contingebant. Sic Job xxvi. 10. / μέχρι συντελείας φωτός καὶ σκότους usque ad confinium lucis et tenebrarum. Hypomnemata of Klijnper.

vertheless, as to the time in which they are to be accomplished, they stand in the same relation to the seals and trumpets, as Joshua's taking the city of Jericho, chap. vi. 3, 4, 5. He compassed the city six days, each day once, and on the seventh day seven times, and took the city by a general shout. It is also manifest from the resemblance of the vials to the trumpets, and the different effects which they produce, that they do not comprise equal periods of time. The three last trumpets take up much more time in their accomplishments, than the four first; and this also is the case with the vials; however the great events, which have occurred in Europe these last twenty-five years, made it appear, that the duration of each of the three last vials, will not be more than fifteen years. Certain it is, that they are not yet poured out, if it has not been done since the beginning of the revolution in France; and in that case they would comprise a shorter time still, than above expressed.

The fifth vial of wrath has probably been poured out A. D. 1798, and the kingdom of the beast has already stood in a state of darkness during fifteen years. The great whore mounted and curbed it, as she pleased. During the time in which the sixth vial is poured out, on the nations upon the river Euphrates. Poperý will probably revive by the assistance of the second beast, and regain in some measure, its first power and grandeur. This second beast will bring all the horrors of persecution on the Protestants; first in Roman Catholic countries, and afterwards in those places of security, to which they shall have fled. And a bloody one it will be, indeed. During the sixth vial it also changes its character, and appears on the stage of action as the *false prophet* for the first time; and like the dragon, and the first beast, breathes out of its mouth one of those three unclean spirits like frogs, which go forth to gather the kings of the earth to the battle of the great day of God Almighty.

Though popery, as established by Hildebrand, has done immense injury to the Church of Christ on earth—and is even now preparing, to fill up its measure to the brim, by the abominations of the second beast; yet it has only been the beast from the sea. Those calamities and corruptions, which the beast from the bottomless pit will cause over all Christendom, far exceed the Papal tyranny. As the Apocalypse saith but little of the doctrine of this Antichristian power, whose element is Atheism; I will here supply the reader with some of his most prominent tenets from other parts of the Holy Scriptures.

Daniel chap. vii. 25. He shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the Saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws. Chap. xi. 36—45. He shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every God, and shall speak marvellous things against the God of gods. Neither shall he regard the God of his fathers, nor the desire of women, nor regard any God: for he shall magnify himself above all. But in his estate shall he honour his God *Mozim* (in the Heb.)

2 Thessal. ii. The day of Christ shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he, as God, sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God. His coming is after the working of Satan, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders, and with all deceiveableness of unrighteousness in them that perish.

1 Epist. John, chap. xi. 22. He is Antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son. Chap. iv. 3. And every spirit that confesseth not, that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is not of God: this is that Antichrist.

O God! These things are so near at hand, and we continue so careless and unconcerned for ourselves and our children;—they are so certain and important, and we are

so unprepared to meet them, as our Heavenly calling requires ; they are not yet passed by, and the third angel shall now soon rouse our slumbering hearts to action, by his terrible denunciation against those, who worship the beast and his image.

May the Spirit of the Father, and of Jesus Christ, be the guide, and comfort of all who read and hear this treatise.





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**THE FIRST**

**SERIES OF PROPHECY.**

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THE END

THE END OF THE WORLD

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# THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

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# Prospective View of the Prophetic Chronology and Prophecies of the Apocalypse.

<p>I. <i>Seal</i>—A white horse, and the rider had a bow and crown, and went forth conquering, and to conquer . . . . .</p>	<p>72 50</p>	<p>This conqueror is <i>us Christ</i> in his Church and Religion. He is dignified with a <i>crown</i>, because of his victory over Judaism, has a <i>bow</i>, to wound at a distance and subdue the kingdoms of this world, take room for the kingdom of God. He rides on the victories of the Romans.</p>
<p>II. <i>Seal</i>—A red horse, the rider had power to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another; and a great sword was given him . . . . .</p>	<p>122 50</p>	<p>This Seal denotes a time of sedition, insurrection and great bloodshed, particularly in Asia. The Jews, with Barcochebas at their head, rose into open rebellion throughout the whole Roman empire, from A. D. 135—to 135, but more especially in the East. More than fifty cities, and nine hundred and eighty-five towns of the Jews were totally destroyed, and six thousand Jews lost their lives. The civil wars began during this period in the Roman empire—and the third and fourth persecution raged violently in Asia.</p>
<p>III. <i>Seal</i>—A black horse, the rider had a pair of balances to weigh grain for bread; and he was not to hurt oil and wine . . . . .</p>	<p>172 50</p>	<p>This seal denotes <i>famine</i>, high price and scarcity of grain, yet not so remarkable for its degree, as duration. All this befell the Roman empire from the last years of Antonius Philos. to the first years of the reign of Severus, and alternately during this period, as Tertull. and Dion testify, there were scanty crops, inundations, earthquakes, droughts foraging and desolating armies, &amp;c. &amp;c.</p>
<p>IV. <i>Seal</i>—A pale horse, the rider was death, and hell followed with him. He had power to kill the fourth part of the earth by the sword, hunger, death and the beasts . . . . .</p>	<p>222 50</p>	<p>Here are pestilence, hunger, war and beasts, the four sore judgments of God. Ezekiel xiv. 21. The plague raged fifteen years throughout every province of the Roman empire from A. D. 250—to 265; more fatal and general, than ever before. It was preceded by a general famine in the year 248. During this period, the whole empire fell into disorder. The Barbarians broke in on the <i>frontiers</i>; the military raised seditions, and insurrections, and murdered the emperors.</p>
<p>V. <i>Seal</i>—The Martyrs cried under the Altar, and received white robes, and were told to rest a chronos . . . . .</p>	<p>272 50</p>	<p>Here the Lord discovers to the church the tenth persecution, and at the same time the end of their sufferings in that way. He raised the curtain, and gave a view of their state in the other world. They were to rest a <i>chronos</i>, until their other brethren should be finished as they were. This cry began during the tenth persecution: say A. D. 314 A <i>chronos</i> is 1100 — Commencement of the period of persecution against the Bohemian-Moravian church, and many in other countries. 1414</p>
<p>VI. <i>Seal</i>—A striking representation of the last day of judgment; the day of the wrath of the Lamb . . . . . Four angels holding the four winds of the earth till the 144,000 were sealed A multitude in white robes before the throne . . . . .</p>	<p>322 50</p>	<p>This is the judgment, the final doom of Heathenism in the Roman empire. The conversion of <i>Constantine</i> the great, to the Christian religion, was no doubt, the most fatal blow Paganism ever met with. It was first published to the world, by his Edict in the year 324; and from that period it declined gradually to its total abolition.</p>
<p>VII. <i>Seal</i>—Silence in heaven for half an hour 1. <i>Trumpet</i>—Hail and fire mingled with blood, is cast on the earth; the third part of trees, and all green grass is burnt . . . . .</p>	<p>372 50</p>	<p>These four winds denote those barbarous nations, who in this period began to invade the Roman empire, and afterwards actually rent the western part of it to pieces. As yet, they only made attacks on the <i>frontiers</i>, and here we see the hand, which stayed their course at this time. The 144,000 by this sealing received a peculiar portion of grace, in order to self-subsistence, and power invincible under the trials to come. They are by this number designated to be the true Church of Christ, which reaches the gates of New Jerusalem.</p>
<p>2. <i>Trumpet</i>—A great mountain, burning with fire was cast into the sea; and the third part of the sea became blood . . . . .</p>	<p>422 50</p>	<p>This burning mountain denotes that precipitate invasion of Africa and the maritime coasts of the Mediterranean sea, by the Vandals and Alans under their king Genserich. He began it A. D. 427, at the head of 80,000 men. Genserich was a bloodhound, and his soldiery without mercy. In twelve years they subdued all Africa; carried on a most bloody persecution against the Catholics; waged a war of fifty years against the Romans, which cost five millions of men; and desolated all countries around them with fire and sword.</p>
<p>3. <i>Trumpet</i>—A great Star fell from heaven upon the rivers and fountains of water, and made the third part of them poisonously bitter . . . . .</p>	<p>472 50</p>	<p>This <i>Star</i> denotes the Bishop of Rome, who now laid the first foundation to that enormous power, wealth and splendour, of which his successors afterwards obtained full possession. Religion and worship was impregnated with superstition, idolatry and human invention, and ceremonies greatly multiplied; and one third of the waters of life were made poisonous and destructive of spiritual life.</p>
<p>4. <i>Trumpet</i>—The third part of the sun, moon and stars was smitten, and the third part of day and night darkened An angel flying through the midst of heaven saying: <i>woe, woe, woe.</i> I. Interval of . . . . .</p>	<p>522 50 572 50 622</p>	<p>The <i>sun</i> denotes the religion of Christ; the <i>moon</i> the Christian worship; the <i>stars</i> the Bishops and principal teachers; <i>day</i>, the state of vital Christianity; <i>night</i>, the state of the Jews, or of learning and philosophy. They were eclipsed one third, by the invasion of the barbarians, the corruptions of religion, the contentions of the bishops for honours, wealth and power, the ignorance and vices of the clergy and teachers in seminaries, and the burning of many libraries by the barbarians.</p>
<p>5. <i>Trumpet</i> . . . . .</p>	<p>572 50 672</p>	<p>Signs of this flying angel may be found in the writers of this period; some of which wrote on the Revelation and the signs of the times.</p>
<p>II. Interval of . . . . .</p>	<p>50 801</p>	<p>This <i>woe</i> began with the rise of Mahomed, his religion and wars. He made himself master of all Arabia in nine years, and subdued several adjacent provinces. His followers conquered Syria and Palestine till 635; Persia, 637; Africa, 647; Cyprus, 648; Cilicia and Lycia, 672; Spain, 713; and many other countries—</p>
<p>6. <i>Trumpet</i> . . . . . An angel swearing <i>ὅτι ἔρχεται ὁ κύριος ἔτι</i>, that it will not be a <i>chronos</i> more. From 772 A. Chron. is 1100 1872 Commencement of many kings III. Interval of . . . . .</p>	<p>50 772 10 782 50 832</p>	<p>They were humbled by the victories of Leontius A. D. 695, but their rapid progress was checked, and their power broken in Christendom by that memorable victory of Charles Martell's 734, in which 370,000 remained on the field of battle. By the time 751, this <i>woe</i> ceased within the limits of the Church; to which this number refers.</p>
<p>7. <i>Trumpet</i>—The most important and comprising of all</p>	<p>801 50 1073 50 1123</p>	<p>This trumpet proclaims that remarkable event upon the waters of the river Euphrates, where during this period four great nations, the <i>Arabs</i>, the <i>Turks</i>, the <i>Persians</i>, and the <i>Tartars</i> incorporated themselves into one religious community; divided the <i>Saracen empire</i> into many kingdoms and principalities, by immense armies, blood and slaughter; desolated and destroyed each other; and almost crushed the Church of Christ in Asia, by their sanguinary persecution against the Christians, and fanatic fury in propagating Mahomedism.</p>



LINE OF KINGS.	772	THE WOMAN.	782	SION, ANGELS, VIALS, HARVEST, &c.	BEAST FROM THE SEA.	1073		
In chapter x. 11 only those princes of kingdoms are understood, whose dominions have been parts of the old Roman Empire; more especially the German Empire.		This woman is a symbol of the Church of Christ at that time. The Sun, is the newly established empire of the West. The Moon, the Mahomedan power and religion. The Stars, the twelve apostles, their doctrine and authority. I. The methodical time of the seventh trumpet comprises that period, during which she received her apparel; the time of her pregnancy and parturition—the appearance of the dragon within the pales of the Church, and his attempt on the woman. II. The extraordinary time comprises her A. Escape—to a place prepared of God. <i>Φενοῦ</i> , denotes a quick motion on the earth. The Church from that time, extended her banners over all Europe, under the protection of the imperial power. This change of state of the woman denotes: 1. Separation from the abominations and corruptions of the ruling church power. 2. Enlargement and augmentation on land. 3. Transporting the heart of the church to another place. From 832 1260 days 677 1509 In the intermediate time, war in heaven h. e. within the limits of the Church, between Michael and the Dragon. a. The Dragon, by the Pagans their rulers and priests. b. Michael by the Christian princes, teachers and religion. The Dragon was cast out of the limits of the Church by the conversion of the Pagans; from Europe into Asia. B. The flight—into her place. <i>πτερόμα</i> , to move with wings, by the help of air. During the Reformation, the Church revived and acquired new vigour, for the purposes of her establishment on earth. This flight imports 1. A peremptory separation from Papal hierarchy. 2. A flying propagation of the Evangelic doctrine. 3. Emigrations into foreign countries, by the help of navigation. 4. Extensive missionary establishments, by the help of ships and air. 5. Bible societies, for spreading the Word of God. The flood of the Serpent denotes the Turks and their invasions of Christendom, which lasted to the year 1683. The remnant of her seed, are the Christians in Pagan and Mahomedan countries. In this place the text says: <i>τερεσται, sensu passivo vel medio altius</i> , she has nourishment, h. e. she is nourished and provides herself. A time 100 years. Times 200 ½ a time 50 350 above 1509 1859 The marriage of the Lamb is come, Rev. xix. 7. I. The Millennium Rev. xx. 1. Resurrection of the Martyrs. 2. Judgment in the court of heaven in their case; a. to live a thousand years— b. to reign with Christ as priest— 3. Christ's reign— II. Satan loosed out of his prison. 1. Goes to deceive the nations— 2. Gathers them to battle around the camp and city of the Saints— 3. The Devil cast into the lake— III. Day of Judgment. IV. New heaven and new earth.	50 832 677 1509 1740 1789 1814 1815 1829 1844 1844 1859 1000 950 4000	1. The Lamb with his company on Mount Zion. During all the corruption of the church power in doctrine and worship, there had yet been many in every country, who withdrew, lived separate, and bore witness. They were branded with many names in France, Italy, Bohemia and Germany, and often persecuted. About the year 1176, a considerable number flew from France to Bohemia, united with the brethren there, and established a church on apostolic principles of doctrine, worship and discipline; a Christian church indeed. The number 144,000 designates them, as a truly Christian church, which by its succession shall reach the gates of New Jerusalem. They are 1. not defiled with women, h. e. idolatrous churches, sects, orders, 2. follow the Lamb in doctrine and practice, 3. in their mouth there is no guile, false doctrine. A. D. 1627, during that inhuman persecution, this church in Bohemia was ruined to the foundation, and its members fled into Germany; a body of whom have since been collected into the Moravian society, and the greater part united with the Protestant churches. II. The three angels flying in the midst of heaven, are three Patriarchs of the Church, each of whom has a peculiar fundamental principle of doctrine, by which he stands distinguished, and may be known from the rest of his brethren, and those belonging to his voice. A. Angel—preaches an eternal Gospel—constraining fear of God, as Creator, to give him glory. The midst of heaven is no doubt Germany here, and John Arndt and his colleagues in that great revival of practical and experimental religion, in his time, this angel. He has been more or less the means of all revivals of religion in Europe since, by Spener, Frankius, Tersteegen, Zinzendorf, and Wesley &c. His writings have been immensely blessed and translated into seven languages. B. Angel. His main point of doctrine is: Babylon is fallen! He will hear, 1. a strong testimony against Popery, and her corruptions; 2. but particularly point out her downfall, as to time, manner and instruments, with great force and penetration— This angel is the pious Bengelius and all those great men in England, France and Germany, who have made the Revelation their particular study, and followed his steps. It was little understood before his time. III. The Vials comprise a time of fifty years. They all contain the wrath of God and crush the beast. They are poured out on the 1. Earth, governments, civil authorities. 2. Sea, bulk of the people. 3. Rivers, fountains, institutions of instruction, pulpit, seminaries, &c. &c. 4. Sun, the German empire. 5. Throne of the beast—Authority. 6. River Euphrates—the nations there for the space of fifteen years. The three unclean spirits. C. Angel, warning by the most menacing denunciation in Holy Scriptures. IV. The harvest of the earth—Rev. xiv. 14—16. 7. Vial, into the air, a mighty revolution over all Europe, especially in the Catholic states—to make room for the ten horns. V. The Vine press of God's wrath—Rev. xiv. 17—20. All nations shall come and worship before thee, O Lord; for thy judgments are made manifest. Rev. xv. 4.	1614 1740 1789 1814 1815 1829 1844 1844 1859 1000 950 4000	This year Pope Gregory VII. from the house of Hildebrand mounted the Papal chair. He laid a new foundation for aggrandizing the power and dignity of the Roman See, with the greatest consequences both in church and state. This spiritual monarchy, as established, enlarged and propagated by him and his successors, is this Beast. During the time of the seventh Trumpet, it was engendered, and grew to perfection. 1. IT BEGAN to sway the sceptre legally, A.D. 1123, by the unlimited subjection of all ecclesiastical persons and their possessions; and by assuming sovereign prerogatives even over all temporal princes. This was sealed by the first western general council, held during this year in the Lateran, of near a thousand prelates; in which also the celibacy of priests was established. These pretended successors of St. Peter soon rose to the very zenith of authority, and claimed all power in heaven and earth—and the world bowed, and believed. This beast has seven heads, upon seven mountains; a succession of Popes, and a mountain on which they resided to be counted a head. They reigned on 1. Mount Caelius from 1123. 2. Mount Aventinus from 1216. 3. Mount Vaticanus from 1294. 4. Mount Quirinalis from 1464. 5. Mount Esquilinus from 1605. This power it was to hold, and exercise during a period of forty-two months, h. e. 666 Rev. xiii. 9—10. Judgment of retaliation, and distributive justice on those nations under the dominion of the beast; as instruments of persecution, and for blood guiltiness. II. NOW ESSE of the Beast, Rev. 17—8. The great whore mounts the beast. 6. Mount Capitolinus from 1798. On this head reigned the seven senators, appointed by the City Rome and the governor of Bonaparte, to 1814 and now the present pope. Rev. xvii. 10. One is. The Beast from the earth, probably the order of the Jesuits, should they obtain the inquisition—it will a. obtain and exercise great power. b. cause to worship the first beast, c. do great wonders, and deceive, d. say to make an image to the first, to which it gives life. e. cause a mark to be received, and the persecution. Rev. xiv. 12, 13. 7. Mount Viminalis. III. ASCENSION from the bottomless pit, at first an Antipope. 1. The ten kings. Rev. xvii. 12. 2. has the false prophet to his assistance. 3. makes the whore desolate, utter destruction of Babylon. 4. makes war with the Lamb—battle in Harnageddon. 5. cast alive, with the false prophet, into the lake of fire. Satan bound a thousand years. True and righteous are his judgments on the great whore, the beast and false prophet. Rev. xix. 2.	50 666 1789 25 1814 15 1829 1844 1844 6 1860	First Rudiments of the Beast from the bottomless pit and of his Empire, which from this time still grows, like the beast from the sea from the time of Gregory, 50 years. The Jesuits celebrated a solemn festival in Rome, d. 2 Aug. 1814; and are since re-established in Spain, with the inquisition.





EXPOSITION  
OF THE  
*REVELATION*  
OF  
**JESUS CHRIST.**

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CHAPTER I.

1. The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass, and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John.
2. Who bare record of the Word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw.
3. Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein, for the time is at hand.

THIS book is called the Revelation of St. John, the Divine. It entitles itself the Apocalypsis of Jesus Christ, which name it ought to have retained. Upon a general view of its contents, it is a proclamation of the Son of God—the heir of all things and head of the human family; the King of kings, and Lord of lords; that all power in heaven and earth is given unto him, to establish his kingdom; and to reign in defiance of all the powers of darkness, till he has put down all rule, and all authority, and laid all his enemies under his feet.

Of all the oracles of God, this volume is the most remarkable, and of all scripture prophecies, certainly the

most important to the church ; not only on account of its sublimity of style, and vast import of expression ; but more particularly, because it is in a peculiar sense of the world, a written document of Jesus Christ. In his other writings, the apostle being moved by the Holy Ghost, has written from the treasure of divine knowledge and wisdom, which he possessed ; but here, except a few remarks of the inspired penman, he has only written what the Lord himself dictated to him, and what he saw and heard ; wherefore the whole work is of the Lord's own management, and in fact his Revelation. For after the addresses to the seven churches, which the apostle has written down from the lips of the Lord, and a description of the exalted theatre of vision, in the first five chapters of this book, the apostle from chapter vi. to chapter viii. only gives us a copy of that volume in heaven, which the Lion of Judea opened. And all what we read from chapter viii. to chap. ix. 21. is not a transcript from that book with seven seals, but an emblematical representation of a series of facts, which have since occurred, and are recorded on the page of history.

Verse 1. *Which God gave unto him.* Our blessed Lord in his mediatorial character, became acquainted with many things after his exaltation to the right hand of the Father, which he did not know during his pilgrimage on earth. Matthew xxiv. 36. Mark xiii. 32. Acts i. 7. He formerly ascribed all to his Father. John xii. 49. The doctrines which he taught, the miracles which he performed, were the command or gift of his Father ; John v. 36. chap. x. 25—whatever he possessed, he enjoyed in union with him, John xvi. 15—and here he makes the same confession still, even after his ascension. Surprising humility ! Precious truth ! Of which God is the fountain, Christ the teacher, Angels the servants, Apostles the witnesses, and the Children of God the scholars. Since God has given this Revelation to Jesus Christ, there must be many things in it, unknown

to the holy prophets, and not found in their writings. Every truth ought to be dear to us, whether revealed by degrees, or all at once in meridian splendour; to more of the inspired writers, or only to one.

The Revelation rests on the authority of the Son of God; no testimony can be stronger. If we even had not a sufficiency of historical evidence, in favour of its divine origin; yet the children of God would know this book by its language. No ancient or modern poet ever possessed such a power of invention. In reading this volume, every single and discerning eye must see, and every open and willing heart feel, the presence of a Divine power pervading the whole. He sent it by his angel to his servant John, who makes himself known to be no other than the apostle. Chapter i. 1, 2, 4, 9. chap. xx. 8.

*Things which must shortly come to pass.* The original ἐν τάχει ought to be rendered here, *in quick succession*, as the post positive αἶ in the plural, refers to the whole series of prophecies. They *must* come to pass, in order to fulfil many of the prophecies in the Old Testament, to finish the mystery of God, and to establish the kingdom of Jesus Christ on earth. They must come in quick succession—in a pressed series of events, where the accomplishment of one prophecy immediately follows and re-leaves the other, in one connected chain to its final completion.

*He has signified its contents.* The original σημαίνω which is here rendered, *signified*, denotes *to express by emblematical or figurative language*. See John xii. 33. Our blessed Lord therefore is also the author of this style, words and manner of expression in this book; which may, account for its difference from the style of the apostle in his Gospel and Epistles. This style, though dark and mysterious in many instances, is yet sufficiently intelligible to those, who are acquainted with the spirit of pro-



*Unto his servants.* Who are the *servants* of Jesus? The Lord tells us himself chap. xi. 18. They are the *prophets*, the *saints*, they that fear his name and praise him, small and great. Chap. xix. 5. His servants with respect to a christian life, are all true believers, who are justified by faith, and in a state of sanctifying grace, obedient to the Gospel of Christ by virtue of a thorough change of heart, through the efficacy of the Holy Spirit. But with respect to office, the rulers of this world, and more particularly *the ministers of the Gospel* are called his servants. I take this word here, to denote all true members of the Church of Christ, and especially all pious pastors of flocks, who preach the Word with the good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God. Rom. xii. 2. Unto them the Lord sent this Revelation, as a memorial of his love, and an instrument of instruction and comfort, during the whole time of its accomplishment. Thus it is made their solemn duty to attend to this word of prophecy; and the third verse informs them, that their spiritual happiness is connected with their compliance.

Verse 3. *Blessed is he that readeth and they that hear.* Oh! That guilty backwardness of many in our days, to read and study this invaluable treasure of the christian, for fear of incurring the ridicule of infidels, or the piteous smile of the wise men of this world. Some in our days neglect this kind of study, even from hypocrisy. They assume a superior air of sanctity, as if their minds were employed in matters of far greater moment than this, and therefore pray to be excused. Should a mortal presume to know better what he ought to read, than God? However the study of the prophecies should not be our first care; for what will all this knowledge avail, if we die in our sins at last. Our first duty is, to seek the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. We must be experimentally acquainted with the ways of God in Christ Jesus, to derive real benefit from know-



ledge of this kind. He, whose eternal interest is truly settled, will study the prophecies to the advantage of his soul's concerns, where the unconverted speculator only satisfies vain curiosity. A child of God is, as it were, at home in the heavenly economy of his father's house, has a right to employ himself on these subjects, and knows, how to do it in a manner becoming his kingdom.

4. John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, which was, and which is to come ; and from the seven spirits which are before his throne ;
5. And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the Prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,
6. And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father ; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever—Amen.

Thus runs the saluting benediction of this book, which according to the oriental manner of writing, always made the beginning of an address or letter, to a child, friend or superior. It was customary with the apostles, to salute the churches with *grace* and *peace* ; these gifts being the principal of all spiritual possessions. To enjoy the grace of God, and that peace which passeth all understanding, is already true happiness in this world—and the *earnest* to our inheritance of the purchased possession in glory. Ephes. i. 14. But this salutation here surpasses all the former apostolic benedictions. They salute from God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ ; but here : Grace and peace from Him, which *is—was—and is to come*—from Him, who only hath absolute immortality, and *is* the sole cause of all existence in heaven and earth ; who *was* the Judge of the Antideluvian world, of Sodom, the Egyptians, and all the enemies of Israel during all former ages ; and the pre-

server of Noah, Lot, Abraham, and all his people under the old covenant; and who *is to come* now, to subdue all his enemies, and finish the mystery of God on earth.

*And from the seven spirits which are before his throne.* It is the Lord Jesus that has the seven spirits of God, chap. iii. 1. By which we are to understand the Holy Ghost in his sevenfold influence and attraction on the Church of Christ. They are not instruments of spectators here; they give grace and peace, and the expression, spirits of God, denotes their excellency. Zech. iii. 1. iv. 10. Isaiah xi. The number seven is the number of perfection in the kingdom of God. Rev. v. 6. and the summit of misery in the regions of darkness. Luke viii. 2. xi. 26. Prov. ix. 1.

Verse 5. *And from Jesus Christ the faithful witness.* The heavenly Hero of the new covenant is here described, as to the excellency and loveliness of his character. *He is the faithful witness*, for he attested the truth, which he was sent from heaven to promulgate to an erring and ungrateful world, and sealed his doctrine with his death. *He is the first begotten of the dead*, because he became the first fruits of them that slept, and rose previously to them all from the grave to a glorified state, and to eternal life; that in all things he might have the pre-eminence to his spiritual body, the church. Coloss. i. 18. *He is the Prince of the kings of the earth.* The word *ἄρχων* here should not be translated *Prince*, but *Supreme Potentate*—for wherever it occurs, it always implies the highest authority, power, or excellence in that connexion; and with the orientals it denotes the first fountain, author and origin of life, light, power, &c. The meaning is, that he is a superior personage, possessed of absolute rights, supreme power and authority over all the generations of men. Ps. lxxxix. 27. *He loved us*, for the Word was made flesh, and laid down his life a ransom for all. By his atonement to the Father, we are washed in his blood; and all those, who

thus receive him by faith, possess a pre-eminence in comparison to the children of this world, like kings, compared to their subjects, and priests according to the Mosaic institution, with unconsecrated men. Yea, they not only enjoy such prerogatives in the Church of Christ now, but also have reason to expect an inheritance in his kingdom about to be established on earth, Matt. v. 5. xix. 29. Mark x. 29. in which they shall be a holy priesthood after the order of Melchisedeck.

7. Behold, he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him; and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen.

8. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.

Thus ends the introduction, and the body of the Revelation commences with the following portion. In these two verses the Lord expresses the principal object of the whole prophecy; which is to prove: that He *is*, *was*, and *cometh* as the Alpha and Omega, the true and eternal Word of God, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, Coloss. ii. 3. The phrase *το Α και το Ω* is a Hebrewism, for *א* and *ו*. The Hebrew alphabet has only twenty-two letters, according to which the ancient Jewish doctors divided their Scriptures into twenty-two books, and expressed the whole canon, by mentioning the first and last letter of the alphabet, which are above in Hebrew and Greek. When therefore the Lord here saith, I am Alpha and Omega, the sense is, that He is the *heart* of the Old Testament, and the *chief object* of its promulgation. The word *Almighty* in the original is *παντοκρατωρ* which signifies, the *source* and *fountain head* of all power and authority.

*All shall see and bewail him!* All the posterity of Abraham, and of those which pierced and crucified him, Zech.

xii. 10; all the tribes of nations covering the face of the earth. Behold! he cometh, not as formerly in a state of humiliation, but now becoming the captain of our salvation—he cometh in glorious majesty, as a reward for the travail of his soul.

9. I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the Word of God, and for the testimony of Christ.

10. I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet,

11. Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, what thou seest, write in a book and send it unto the seven Churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea.

Here the seer of heavenly visions, the tender, lovely apostle John, describes his own person to all the churches, that it was he, whom they well knew as their brother in Christ, their associate in this persecution, a joint heir in the kingdom of God, and who had persevered with Christ in all his trials. His object in making himself known is, to procure the necessary authority for this prophecy, and settle its canonical dignity in the churches for ever.

In the year '95, the Roman emperor Domitian, commenced a violent persecution against the Christians, during which St. John was carried from Ephesus to Rome, where he was thrown into a chaldron of boiling oil, and afterwards banished to the isle of Patmos. Here he remained until the year '97, when the Roman senate, after the death of the emperor, annulled all his decrees, he also returned to Ephesus in the 90th year of his age, and yet lived seven years in peace, to A. D. 104.

The isle of Patmos is one of the Sporades in the Archipelago, about thirty miles in compass, very barren, full of



rocky mountains, without wood, and at present in the hands of the Turks. On this island the holy apostle received the Revelation, during his banishment. If he stood on one of those high and solitary mountains, from which there is an unbounded prospect, full of isles, ocean, and land, his mind must have been naturally disposed to deep and sublime contemplation. For here to the *East*, he had Asia minor, and the seven churches; between *East* and *South*, the Holy Land, though out of sight; towards south, Egypt; towards *West*, the ocean, Greece and Italy; between west and north, Macedon, Greece or European Turkey, and further off Hungary and Germany. In almost all these countries there now were Christian churches planted, and thousands of fellow sufferers for the cause of Christ. They were precious jewels in his sight. He loved them as his own soul—his heart bled for them in this calamity—he often poured out his soul before the throne of grace, for their preservation and prosperity—he had so long laboured for their instruction and comfort, and now was separated from them all, solitary, and without any human assistance in his old age.

Here, on the Lords day, he received the Revelation; which was either a Sabbath, or more probably the day of our blessed Saviour's resurrection. The apostle knew that on this day all Christians were engaged in divine worship, and no doubt was himself wholly absorbed in prayer and heavenly meditation. The circumstances of that time tended much, to augment the zeal and fervour of his devotion. Paganism swayed the sceptre—the Christians were cruelly persecuted, and all prospects for the future prosperity of the Church seemed enveloped in thick darkness. The ways of the Lord had become inscrutable and mysterious to the most sagacious foresight of mortals, and his whole soul thirsted for knowledge. Thus was his mind exalted to a state of heavenly visions, and prepared to hold converse with angels in light.



Verse 10. *I was in the spirit* ἐγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι, may also be rendered *I was set, placed, or put into the spirit*. The apostle felt the impulse of the Holy spirit of God on him, withdrawing his mind from all sensible objects, and placing his soul in a state of ecstasy and vision. Acts x. 10, 11. Mark xii. 36. Hence it follows, that the images which he describes, did not actually exist, and appear to his external senses, but that the whole vision passed by ideas through his mind, from a divine impulse, of which the angel mentioned in the first verse, seems to have been the means.

*A great voice as of a trumpet.* The ancients had only two wind instruments of this sort, the ram's horn, and the silver trumpet; probably the first is here meant, as its sound was more solemn and majestic. Exod. xix. 16 Numbers x. 2.

Verse 11. *Send it unto the seven Churches.* The number seven in this book, is the number of perfection, and here indicative of the whole Church of Christ; of which these select bodies of Christians in Asia, are only the representatives. There were larger and more considerable congregations at that time, even in Asia; and it is remarkable that these epistles are not addressed to them. How the holy father at Rome would rejoice, if they had been addressed to one of his predecessors also? No doubt, he would have discovered a variation in the text somewhere, and established a conjecture, so as to favour his pretended superiority in the church? But alas, Rome is not mentioned at all.

12. And I turned to see the voice that spake with me, And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks.

13. And in the midst of the seven candlesticks, one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle.

14. His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow: and his eyes as a flame of fire;
15. And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters.
16. And he had in his right hand seven stars, and out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword; and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.

Great God, what terrible majesty! Who can form to himself a lively conception of this appearance without being penetrated with a holy reverence and awe, ready to fall down and worship at his feet. Who does here not recollect the Lion of Judah? When he roareth, who would not tremble—when the Son of God commands, who would not submit? Blessed are they that read and hear—blessed those, who keep the words of this prophecy, for the time is at hand. All the tribes of the earth shall wail!

There never was such grandeur and dignity in any angelic apparition, as in this appearance of the Son of God; and yet, this is not his divine majesty, as seen by the hosts of heaven in glory;—It is only an emblematical representation of him, as the head of his Church—the King of kings, and Lord of lords in his heavenly armour and judgments.

Verse 12. *Seven Golden Candlesticks.* They stood in a half circle around his person, and represent the whole Church of Christ on earth, from the commencement of this prophecy to the beginning of the Millennium; when the Lord will establish a new economy and government in his Church—a royal priesthood after the order of Melchisedeck.

Verse 13. *One like unto the Son of Man.* This expression is taken from Daniel vii. “BAR ENASCH,”

by which the Jews always understood the Messiah. Christ often called himself the *Son of Man*, to procure reception for himself and his doctrine among his people. He walks in the midst of the Churches, every where present to afford his aid; inspect, superintend and govern all. One is as near to him, as the other.

*Clothed with a garment down to the foot.* A long white gown, or robe of state, which was the customary dress of dignity with the ancients, and worn by priests, kings, and the Jewish nobility.

*Girt with a golden girdle.* It was a favourite figure in the East, to represent the armour of spiritual warfare, by the emblem of holy garments; in which the girdle denotes the *pledge* of religion, in common combatants, and with the Captain of our salvation here, of his Messiah-ship. It also expresses in scripture, righteousness in judgment, and faithfulness in his promises. Isaiah xi. 5. To be girt about the loins, indicates activity in business—immediately about the paps, solemn and dignified repose. 2 Sam. xx. 8. Daniel x. 5.

Verse 14. *His head and hairs white.* Tradition says, Christ had fair hair, but here it was so extremely white, that the apostle makes two comparisons, to show, that he wanted a word to express it sufficiently. The white colour here denotes holiness of heart, thought and disposition.

*His eyes as a flame of fire.* This is an emblem of his omniscience, infinite discernment and wisdom, in designing and executing his eternal councils on earth. With such eyes he may well observe the movements of his enemies, and the faithfulness of his friends. Reader, imagine you could see him with these eyes surveying the surface of all the earth, and penetrating into the inmost recesses of thine heart, what would he behold?

Verse 15. *His feet like unto fine brass.* The original word is χαλκολίβανον, which does not signify *brass*, but a metal to us entirely unknown, though considered among the ancients more precious, than even gold. We would be nearer the true sense, by translating it; *the most refined metal*, as Bengelius has given it. Perhaps this chalikolibanon in that burning state was partly transparent, and of different colours? This part of the description is indicative both of the glorified state of his body, and the firmness and vigour of his administration.

*His voice as the sound of many waters.* This is the voice of a Hero indeed, capable to marshal an army of millions, and to strike terror and dismay by his word of command into the ranks of his enemies. Probably this is an allusion to the effectual progress of the Gospel, as received by many nations on earth. It has turned many a wilderness of Paganism into a garden of the Lord, watered the parched ground, and satisfied many a thirsty soul.

Verse 16. *In his right hand seven stars.* This emblem denotes the sovereign power and authority, which the Lord exercises over his gospel ministry, as to their appointment, succession, and usefulness in his Church. They are under his more immediate inspection, comfort, and government, for they are in his hand, but the churches are only in his presence.

*A two-edged sword,* ρομφαία δίσομος ὀξεῖα is a very strong expression, and signifies a broad sword with two edges, a glave, as used in slaughter houses. It denotes his fiery indignation against his enemies, and his power and readiness to defend his Church.

*His countenance as the sun in his strength.* It was of such brilliancy and brightness, as the sun during an unclouded and hot summer's day. These words express the excellency and inherent qualities of his glorified body, and his glory as Redeemer of the world, after his ascension. John xvii. 24.



17. And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, fear not; I am the first and the last:
18. I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.
19. Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter;
20. The mystery of the seven stars, which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches; and the seven candlesticks, which thou sawest are the seven churches.

Verse 17. *I fell at his feet as dead.* The apostle turned to know, from whence this formidable and tremendous voice proceeded; and gazing with fixed attention, was struck with amazement and awful apprehensions, more than he was able to support, and fell at his feet as dead. Thus it also happened to Daniel and Isaiah. It appears to be a maxim in the kingdom of God, that before a great measure of heavenly grace can be communicated, a deep debasement of human nature will always precede it. John was so particular an intimate of Christ, during his pilgrimage on earth; and yet, so great was his glory now, that the first sight of his Lord was more, than he could bear. O infidel and sinner, how will you stand before Him!

*He laid his right hand upon me.* The hand of his holiness terrifies; the hand of his power crushes the unbeliever, and saves the penitent; but the hand of his loving kindness revives body and soul. He said, fear not, my beloved John, this my terrible armour is not intended for your destruction. You know me well, *I am the first* source of life, happiness and knowledge, and *the last*, for whom, and to whom are all things. Rom. xi. 36.



Verse 18. *I am he that liveth.* In the foregoing verses the Lord spoke more immediately of his divine nature: I am—the first and the last—which is—was—is to come; he now speaks of his human nature, which alone could die. I am Jesus Christ, the mediator between God and man, who suffered death on the cross in your presence, for the sins of the world, and who now liveth to all eternity.

*For evermore.* εἰς τῆς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων, This expression evidently indicates an infinite duration, but yet *an infinite duration of distinguished times*. All finite beings live in a succession of time, which they measure either by external objects, or by the series of thought and reflection within their own mind. Only God inhabits eternity, and lives exalted above these limits of creation, which can never become the perfection of a creature; because they have begun to exist, from which point their time can always be computed. This must, I presume, also be the case with the human nature of our blessed Lord? That it is, as to his mediatorial office, and future reign, the apostle expressly affirms. 1 Cor. xv. 28.\* The ancient Asiatics, according to *Herder*, who were acquainted with the Chaldean wisdom, and the religious tenets of Zoroaster, considered the whole duration of the world as subdivided by many general revolutions or catastrophes like the flood, predetermined in the councils of heaven. Between these revolutions, the Supreme Deity, in their opinion, changed his ministers and governors of this inferior world, so that no one of the heavenly powers had more than one time of reign on earth. The time of such a reign, from one revolution to the other, the Chaldeans called OLAM, Daniel

\* When the Son shall have arrived at the summit of his Mediatorial glory, having gradually subjected all contrary power, and death itself to his jurisdiction; then a new economy will be established, and a new exalted relation between Christ and his Father, in regard to his manhood, which shall continue through a new succession of ages.

ii. 4. chap. iv. 3. chap. vii. 18. Ezr. iv. 15. which word often occurs in Daniel, and never signifies an absolute eternity, but only an unknown time, or a time having a beginning, but an unknown duration. For an absolute eternity, the Hebrew term is GNAD. Isaiah lvii. 15. This *Olam*, they expressed in the Greek language by the term *αιών*, and made this word the vehicle, of this vast and important Asiatic idea. Hence all the doctrine and heresies about these Aionas during the first centuries of the christian æra. This division of the duration of the world into so many Aionas, is a fundamental idea in the Zend-Avesta, the holy scriptures of the Persians, attributed to Zoroaster, the great reformer of Sabiism; whose religious opinions obtained unlimited sway over all Asia, since the time of Cyrus, and were prevalent yet among Jews and Gentiles, even in the time of St. John. From these considerations, I presume to say, the above original ought to be rendered, “*through all ages of the world;*” In accordance with this idea, the apostle Paul terms Satan, 2 Cor. iv. 4. Ο ΘΕΟΣ ΤΩ ΑΙΩΝΟΣ ΤΩΤΩ, the God, or governor of this age, n. a. in which the kingdom of God is oppressed by temptation, and intellectual darkness, of which Satan is the chief and first cause.

*Keys of death and hell.* By the word hell we understand the place of eternal torment, which is not at all the true meaning of the original word Hades. It is the *Scheol* of the Hebrews, the place of shades, of dawning light, of longing and silent solitude, the place of the general congregation of the dead, the court-yard of eternal justice; where Christ appeared in the assembly of departed spirits. 1. Pet. iii. 17—iv. 6. Hebrews xi. 39, 40. *Death*, in our common acceptation of the word signifies the extinction of animal life in our bodies, or the separation of body and soul. But this cannot be the meaning here. After a mature consideration of all the parallel places, where these words occur, it appears, that after our dissolution, *Hades* is the

place and state of all separate spirits, and *Thanatos* the place and state of the body; where it is dissolved into its first elements, in order that the immortal *bud* or *germ* of the future body may be set at liberty, to bring forth its glorious fruit. In this Hades is Tartarus to the wicked, and Elysium to the good. *Thanatos* and Hades are often mentioned together in scripture. Ps. vi. 5. Isaiah xxviii. 18. xxxviii. 18. and both described as strong and powerful. 1 Cor. xv. 55. Song of Sol. viii. 6. To each of these states and places the Orientals assigned a superintending angel, who governed by severe laws, and defended his own with authority against the encroachments of others.

*Keys* are emblems of power and dignity; they indicate in this place, that our blessed Saviour has sovereign power over both, Rom. xiv. 9. which he has proved even in the moment of his death. *The graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.* Math. xxvii. 52, 53. Where have these saints been during all this time, since their death? And what was their employment? They have surely not been idle: for in the kingdom of God all is industry to useful purposes; and yet, they were only new partakers of his resurrection. Christ should be the first-born of the dead, and thereby demonstrate, that he has despoiled *death* and *hades* of their power, and brought life and immortality to light. The most noble saints of the Old Testament, became the first glorious garland of his resurrection. When Paul endeavours to describe the plenitude of his power, his words encompass the extremities of the universe, when he says: he passed into the lowermost parts of the earth, and ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things. Eph. iv. 9, 10. All knees should bow before him in heaven, on earth, and under the earth; and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is the Lord of glory. Phil. ii. 10, 11. Hebrews i. 3. The

apostle Peter extends the message of his triumph even unto the spirits in prison. 1 Pet. iii. 17—to chap. iv. 6. to those, who had once been the first patterns of wickedness and infidelity, and on that account, pass even in Heathen mythologies for a race of demons, against whom as they say, the Supreme God armed stars and angels, and washed the elements of their pollutions by the flood.

Here the second chapter ought to commence with the 19th verse; for the Lord now begins to dictate the seven epistles to the apostle, whom he commands to be his secretary and amanuensis by saying, write. This divine order however does not only refer to these seven epistles, but also to the whole contents of the Apocalypse; which by his authority, is divided into three parts. St. John was to write and has written:

- I. The things which he had seen, from chap. i. 11—18.
- II. The things which are, from chap. i. 19, 20. ii. 1—7.
- III. The things which shall be hereafter, from chap. ii. 8.

When doctors disagree, who shall decide the controversy? And they differ widely in this place. Some contend, that these addresses are not prophetic, and only concern those seven individual churches in Asia, and their bishops or pastors. Others look upon them, as wholly of a prophetic nature, and as containing a description, of the internal state of vital religion and the most interesting events in the Church of Christ, during seven different periods. Some make these periods of equal, and others of unequal lengths; some describe them as arising in succession, and others let them run parallel to each other for many years. They all hold these seven candlesticks to signify seven churches, and the seven stars their pastors; but they disagree in their applications of these prophecies, and select very different objects, in which they suppose them ful-



filled. It is very probable these great men may have erred on both sides, and the truth lie between them. Those who contend for seven different churches in succession, cannot draw the line of distinction between them with any degree of exactness; and those which only understand the churches in Asia, are often wavering as they proceed to explain, and give us but little satisfaction. I look upon this subject as important and well deserving of mature consideration. If in my researches on this head I have been so fortunate, as to hit upon a rich bed of precious metal, by following a good appearance a few feet deeper; the credit is certainly due to those, who first dug the shaft into the bowels of the earth, and prepared the way for entrance.

These seven stars and seven candlesticks are called a mystery in the 20th verse, and must therefore be of a more comprehensive signification, than merely to denote those churches in Asia: though they surely were of first import to them. These epistles, no doubt, most properly belong to the following prophecy, and stand strictly connected with its contents. We only wish to know in what point of view their relation is to be considered. I have in part ventured my opinion on this head, though with all sincere respect due to the talents, learning, and labours of others. If it should not appear convincing to all my readers, probably some of them have not studied this subject as it deserves. These *churches* are by their number seven [which is the holy number, the number of perfection] the representation of the whole church of Christ, at seven different periods of time; and these *addresses*, are seven *pastoral charges* of the great Shepherd and Bishop of souls, to his *gospel ministry*, and where our Lord expressly designates, also to all the members of his church. They are chiefly addressed to the *gospel ministry*; in direct terms, at the head of every epistle, and the churches are not expressly comprehended in them, except in the annexed



promises. And even there the pious prelate Bengelius reads instead of: *τί τὸ πνεῦμα λέγει ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις*, *what the Spirit saith the Churches*, with an ellipsis taken from chap. xxii. 16. thus: *what the Spirit saith ἐπὶ ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις*, *in or at the churches*; so that the gospel ministry *in or at* those churches is still, even in the annexed promises the principal object in view.

It is the gospel ministry then, which here receives special instruction, concerning their official conduct, and the most successful mode to manage the affairs and government of the church, during those times of extraordinary trial and temptation, to which these pastoral charges refer. The contents of these charges have heretofore been explained, as only concerning the conduct and practice of private christians during perilous times, and their state of vital religion; but the Lord here describes the general character of his ministry, as it is at each period, with praise or censure where due. This being the nature and design of these epistles, we may expect to meet in them with many prophetic views of important events to the church; which also afford light to many of the following prophecies, more particularly, where the pastoral instructions, praise or censure given, are of a special nature, and refer to particular times and places in the church.

Pause then, ye Shepherds of souls! Read and study these charges with renewed and double attention, as expressly addressed to you; to you my reverend brethren in particular. Our candlestick is among these seven, and we constitute one of these angels, to which the Lord of life and death addresses himself. Consider, how serious are his forewarnings—how loving his admonitions—how full of comfort his encouragements—how great his promises, and how faithful his advice. We are in his hand, and the Lord walks in our midst, observing our labours, and inspecting our flocks, with eyes like a flame of fire,

too penetrating to behold. If we enter the conflict under his banner, and fight the good fight of faith; if we perform our duty well, as officers under his command; if we overcome the enemies of our souls, and of his church, our happiness will be complete. But how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation. Hebrews xi. 3.

## CHAPTER II.

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THESE angels of the seven churches then, are not selected in imitation of the *Scheliach Zibbur*, or ruler of the Jewish synagogue. They are not physical persons, or bishops of churches in Asia, at that time; but moral representatives of the whole body of the gospel ministry, at seven different periods, to which these charges refer. Though ministers of the gospel are often represented in the emblematical style of scripture as stars and angels; yet there is a great difference, to be termed a star among millions of other stars, and to be *one of these seven* in the right hand of the Lord. There is more glory, dignity and excellence attached to these, than can ever fall to the share of one servant of Christ. The angels at Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis and Laodicea are also in different places addressed in the plural number, to assist us in arriving at the true sense of this word.

The seven candlesticks, by which the Church of Christ is represented in these pastoral letters, were no doubt lighted, and burning in very different degrees of brightness, though it is not expressly mentioned in the text. The first christian churches had a great measure of light and grace, and bore a clear testimony concerning Christ, to all Heathen nations. They were candlesticks burning with a holy flame of love and zeal for the glory of Christ and the conversion of souls. Some churches now scarcely shine or burn—some burn without shining, and others shine

without burning. Knowledge and testimony avail not—they are but half the character of a christian church ; our hearts must be filled with the love of Jesus, and all our conversation sanctified and zealous for the good of souls, to meet the approbation of the Lord.

It is worthy of remark, that these seven charges of the great Bishop of souls to his gospel ministry, are all conceived and arranged after one uniform method and disposition. A few slight deviations excepted, where the state and situation of the ministry is so very different, and the time peculiarly eventful ; the contents of every charge are adjusted in the following order of the charge unto the angel at Ephesus.



## A PASTORAL CHARGE TO THE ANGEL AT EPHESUS.

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*It contains from verse 1 to 7.*

- I. *A command to write*, what the Lord Jesus Christ was about to dictate.
- II. *A declaration of part of his glorious title*. These things saith he, that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks. The Lord here declares himself the great presiding Shepherd of souls, from whom the whole body of the gospel ministry derive their office and authority in the church. He upholds them in his hand, and protects them by his power, against all attempts of their enemies towards their destruction; and employs the light they emit, according to his own pleasure. In the midst of the churches, he is every where present, omniscient to discern all their wants—all powerful and willing to help.
- III. *The pastoral charge itself*, to the gospel ministry, in which
  1. *The Lord bears testimony to their official character*.
    - a. *I know thy works, and thy labours*. These two words, *works* and *labour*, are no tautology; they would be as they stand, but the first is not properly translated, *εργον*, not only signifies *work*, it also denotes *office*. See 1 Tim. iii. 1.

Tim. iv. 5. John xvii. 4. Acts xiii. 2. Et apud Xenoph. Lib. ii. πᾶν ἐργον, *tuum est officium*. It should be here rendered: *I have inspected thy offices*, in every department of the church, [as established at the time, to which this charge refers,] bishops, chorepiscopi, presbyters, deacons and deaconesses, in all their functions; and am perfectly sensible of the toil and diligence, you severally undertake for the good of souls among Jews and Gentiles, and for the prosperity of my Church.

- b. *And thy patience*. Thy continuance in performing thy duties against all disappointments, obstacles and crosses, and in bearing thy enemies with meekness of heart.
- c. *Thou canst not bear them, which are evil*. This refers to the strict church-discipline of the first christians, in requiring experimental religion, pure morals and christian practice of all their members, in which they have never afterwards been equalled, even to the present day.
- d. *Tried them which say, they are apostles*. About that time and after the death of the apostle, the church was much infested by false apostles, and teachers of heresy. But the ministry watched to preserve the christian doctrine pure. No doubt, they have often been cried down in consequence of their faithfulness in this respect, as uncharitable and severe by these pretenders, and their deluded adherents; but they followed the example of their Saviour, and here obtained his approbation.
- e. *Thou hast borne, and hast laboured for my name's sake*. The acts of the apostles, their epistles to the churches, and the accounts of the apostolic fathers are a comment on these words. It is

impossible to read them and not to be filled with reverence for the ministry of those days. Their labours for the good of souls, their patience, sufferings and indefatigable zeal for the cause of their Lord, will remain a standing example to the end of time. Thou hast not fainted says the Lord, till towards the close of this period,

2. *When he censures them thus : Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.* Pure love to God and men is the soul of christianity, the distinguishing characteristic of all true disciples of Christ, the main spring to all good works, and an indispensable part in the character of a useful evangelic pastor. He yet had love, but it now began to be mingled with self-love, and worldly interest; where at first his whole body and soul had been a living sacrifice to the Lord in his vineyard, because he had loved him first, and called him to that great and distinguished honour, of being a servant in his church.
3. *An exhortation. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works.* Only recollect how bright and brilliant your star once shone in the knowledge of divine things; how your heart was warmed with the love of Jesus in the preaching of the gospel, and instructing the penitent sinner; how all your actions spoke faith, zeal and charity; how your labours were blessed to the conversion of thousands; and compare it with your present state of mind and usefulness in the church. Repent, Oh let your mind be changed to what it was at first, and do the first works!

4. *Motives to repentance.* Or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent;—But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate. The Nicolaitanes were a sort of Gnostic philosophers, who according to church history, combined sensual enjoyments with the pure doctrines of christianity. This temptation seems to have been most subtle and spacious; the Lord found it necessary to signify his entire abhorrence of their deeds. The ministry after St. John's days, though fallen, were not yet sunk so deep, as to adopt such principles; and the Lord told them so, in order to encourage them to repentance. Yea, to excite a prompt compliance, he threatens to remove their candlestick and bring his people away to another place; which also was afterwards done. For the light of christian knowledge has since been almost entirely extinguished in all those places in the East, where the first churches flourished.
5. *A glorious promise.*
- a. *A word to excite the attention of all christians.* He that hath an ear, let him hear, what the Spirit saith [in] unto the churches. Whoever has a sufficient acquaintance with the spirit of prophecy, and a cultivated mind to discern spiritual matters, let him attend to what is here said by the Lord, in the churches of the ministry and their spiritual warfare and glorious reward.
  - b. *The promise.* To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God. It is selfconceit, when the unconverted man imagines himself belonging to the number of these spiritual combatants, and presume to comfort himself with these promises.



He knows nothing of this warfare, and as yet, is himself an enemy to God. Rom. viii. 7. This great conflict must first commence within our own hearts, before we can rally around the banners of Christ, for the defence of his church. And that only begins, when in the day of God's power, the sinner's eyes are opened, and he turned from darkness to light, and from the power [ $\tauῆς ἐξουσίας$  armour] of Satan unto God, that he may by spiritual arms and divine assistance, combat his own corruptions, and fight the good fight of faith in the presence of the Lord. Only those pastors then, truly and experimentally acquainted with Christ, can take an effectual share in this conflict of the church, under her great Captain. And all those who do, and endure manfully to the end, overcoming the enemies of Christ in their desperate attempts against his church in their time, shall eat of the tree of life; of which the tree in Eden was only the type, from which Adam was prevented to eat after the fall, by being banished out of paradise. It was customary with the ancient Hebrews and many Eastern nations, to term every thing very beautiful, salutary or glorious a *tree of life*; but here it seems to convey the peculiar promise of immortality, in a state of innocence and fruition of God, of which the happiness of our first parents is only a figure. According to the Zend Avesta, or scriptures of the Persians, the tree of life grows in the midst of the fountain of immortality, upon the holy mount, right in the centre of the world. Here is the mother of rivers, from whence this heavenly element extends itself, pregnant with germs of life for plants, trees, animals and men,

over all the nature of *Ormuzd*. This king of all trees, the tree of life, is nourished by the vital parts of this fountain, and its sap endows with immortality, and produces the resurrection of the dead. See Herders Erläuterungen. II. P. p. 102. This tree of life is, no doubt, a symbol of Jesus Christ, and of the blessed effects of his redemption. John vi. 53—55. Who endows his people with immortality and eternal life in heaven.

This charge next to its general use, seems particularly intended for the first evangelic ministry immediately in, and after the apostolic age. That has been the time, according to church history, when their first love had much abated, when the church was infested by false apostles, the Nicolaitanes and other teachers of heresy, of which however we now know little more, than barely their names. See Mosheims Eccl. History.

## A PASTORAL CHARGE TO THE ANGEL AT SMYRNA.

8. And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write ; these things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive ;
9. I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, [but thou art rich] and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan.
10. Fear none of these things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried: and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.
11. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the spirit saith unto the churches ; he that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.

The exhortation in the former charge seems to have had its desired effect on the gospel ministry of those days, since this pastoral letter contains all praise, comfort and promise, without the least censure or blame. They had returned again to their first love, and were now doing their first works with renewed zeal, for the glory of Christ and his church. Such a revival was also highly necessary. The Lord wanted a host of Martyrs, for some divine purposes unknown to us, and therefore permitted the Roman emperors to turn their whole empire into a fiery furnace of affliction, for all who adored the name of Christ ; in which the hottest place was always appointed for the pastors of the church.

Verse 8. *Was dead and is alive.* He first died for us, and it is therefore no more than reasonable and just, we also should die for him and for his cause. He is now alive, by his own power, and having the keys of hell and of death, is able to raise us to glory. He is sole proprietor of our life as our creator, preserver, and since he has given himself a ransom for us, when we, by sin, had forfeited all right and title among the living; and may therefore demand it when, and in what manner he may judge expedient.

Verse 9. *I know thy works.* Inter ἔιδω, ὄραω, βλέπω, θεωρομαι, θεωρεω, hoc videtur interresse, quod ἔιδω, sit perspicio. See Pasor. οἶδά therefore may be rendered: *I have well observed, understood,* [Mark iv. 12.] or minutely inspected all your different offices, with what sort of persons they are filled, and how they are administered.

*Tribulation.* Here the Lord foretells those sanguinary and barbarous persécutions, which the christians suffered during the first centuries under the Roman emperors. The followers of Christ, and more especially the ministers, suffered all kinds of punishments and tortures, both capital and corrective, to the amount of some millions of souls. It is by no means improbable, that the Lord may here allude to *ten* such calamitous times, as the word ἡμέρα, day, often signifies *time*, particularly in the New Testament. Math. xxiii. 30. Luke iv. 25. Math. ii. 1. vii. 22. John ix. 4. Rom. xiii. 12. But the first two under Nero and Domitian cannot be taken into this account, as they were already past.

*Poverty, but thou art rich.* The Pagan magistracy at that time throughout the whole Roman empire, rapacious and insatiable, were perpetually gaping after the confiscation of property in order to enrich themselves. When the multitude craved the blood of the christians, they readily consented, and transferred the greatest part of the forfeitures to their own pockets. Where the father of a



family suffered martyrdom, or became a public *confessor*, the magistracy stripped the whole family of their estate; and hence the extreme poverty and indigence of the ministers. The Lord himself comforts them here in their distresses, by reminding and assuring them a-new, of their great reward on the day of retribution. Math. xix. 29. Mark. x. 29.

*Blasphemy of the Jews.* The Jews persecuted the christians with great hatred and malignity from the time of Christ's death to their total defeat under Adrian. Even after they had lost the power to execute their cruel purposes themselves, they turned inveterate and public accusers against them, so long as they could obtain a hearing. In Palestine and all the Roman provinces, they seized every occasion to load them with injuries and reproach. In order to stir up both the magistracy and people to their destruction, they accused them of being enemies to the Roman emperors, and state; the same as the Roman Catholics have lately done in France against the Protestants. The Church of Christ at no time had more perfidious and bitter enemies, than the Jews, wherefore the Lord here calls them a synagogue of Satan; which word signifies, an accuser in judgment. They were false Jews, and instruments of Satan. Rom. ii. 28.

Verse 10. *Fear none of those things.* This comfort and assurance, no doubt, was very necessary. It is likely that many of the ministry were much discouraged by the violent opposition of the Jews, and the bloody persecution of the Heathens, and some may have entertained serious thoughts of ceasing to preach. They were every moment in danger of their lives, since the Heathens and Jews sought them in particular, and tried every manner of torture to induce them to apostatize. Their flesh had no rest, but was troubled on every side; without were fightings and death, within were fears, 2. Cor. vii. 5. The Lord therefore answers beforehand to their awful state of mind:

fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer, as though you might not be able to endure these pains, and forced to apostacy, hurt my cause, and lose your souls at last. Take courage, and go on to perform the duties of your offices in every department, I will never forsake you. Be christians, and bishops of souls in sincerity; all your sufferings will work together for your good. You will be sifted like grain, and tried like gold in a furnace, that you may be qualified for my purposes.

*Crown of life.* The Revelation takes notice of two sorts of crowns, a regal or imperial crown, and a crown of victory; this last is to be understood in this place. It was customary among the ancients, to crown a hero after a victorious campaign. This crown was not only a badge of high honour, it also conferred a dignity and certain privileges, which the conqueror enjoyed in preference to his fellow citizens. But these were only perishable crowns, and earthly privileges—the Lord Jesus promises a crown of life, with the privilege of immortality in his everlasting kingdom. And this peculiar felicity is here offered the gospel ministry, as the reward of being faithful unto death. Their prerogatives then, are not merely citizenship in heaven; but titles to large possessions, peculiar favour and special employments in the most important concerns of Christ's kingdom.

Verse 11. *Second death.* The first death is the separation of body and soul, whereby we are deprived of our first life; the second death is the casting of body and soul into everlasting perdition, whereby we are deprived of the second and eternal life. This state of eternal punishment is therefore called the second death. See chapter xx. 14. xxi. 8.

This pastoral charge is given to the gospel ministry during the time of persecution by public authority, in which Jews and Gentiles were united, for the total destruction of the Church of Christ. They have withstood that terrible

storm, with a few exceptions, and now enjoy the promise before the throne of the Lamb. Great has been their sacrifice, much greater is their reward now in heaven. Consider, O ye pastors of Christ's flock! that a similar time of such peril and temptation is now again near at hand, and perhaps nearer than we all imagine. How far will our constancy and faithfulness go? What sacrifices shall we be prepared to make? What return shall the Lord receive from us, for the travail of his soul? May the Lord enable us to light our lamps, and provide oil in time, ere it be too late! For the most violent and trying crisis of that persecution, Rev. xiii. 11—18. xiv. 13, is not past, and the beast from the abyss is yet to rise, whose element is now maturing throughout the civilized world.

**A PASTORAL CHARGE**  
**TO THE ANGEL AT PERGAMOS.**

12. And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write ; these things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges.
13. I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days, wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth.
14. But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto Idols, and to commit fornication.
15. So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate.
16. Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.
17. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto [at, in] the churches; to him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.

Here is an other proof, why these addresses should be considered in the light of pastoral charges. The Lord



appears at the head of his church, in his episcopal character, and pronounceth public excommunication against the corrupters of his institution, in the face of all. He protests at Ephesus, against the false Apostles ; at Smyrna, against the false Jews ; and here at Pergamos against those, who confused Christianity by blending it with Paganism ; and these together with the Nicolaitanes, are hereby solemnly excluded from the sheepfold of Christ. Against all these heretics and their principles, the ministers of those times seem to have been too lenitive and surrendered privileges, derogatory to the prosperity and majesty of the Church ; for which the Lord here censures them, and corrects their faults.

Verse 12. *A sharp sword with two edges.* See chap. i. 16.

Verse 13. *Thou dwellest, where Satan's seat is.* Θρόνος ought not to be translated *seat*, but *throne*. Seat is only a place of rest and abode ; but throne implies government, regal authority, the centre of empire ; and this last signification is certainly the meaning here. Such a residence and throne of Satan has been Paganism, and the city of Rome in the Roman empire, in which Satan made the emperors his magistracy, and the Pagan priests his legal instruments of persecution against the religion of Christ, as the 9th, and 10th verses clearly affirm. For though all sanguinary persecutions ceased, after the conversion of the emperor Constantine to Christianity ; yet Satan's kingdom fell into many paroxysms of rage and fury in the provinces, where even after this happy change the Heathens retained their temples and religious rites for several centuries. But also in the very heart of the empire Satan held his throne for a considerable time, where the Roman senate, and many of the magistrates, philosophers, rhetoricians, military leaders, and persons of eminence and distinction, remained attached to the service of the Pagan deities. But the words of the Lord convey another idea on this subject, which it imported the church

very much to know. He tells them, that Paganism in the Roman empire is the throne and centrepoint, the *visible residence* of Satan's kingdom in this world, where his power and influence was of the first importance. Thus he informs them of their danger and peril, and what momentous effects their constancy and faithfulness would have, towards the glory of Christ's Church, and the destruction of the power of Satan on earth.

But also Pergamos was such a little throne of Satan's, wholly given to idolatry, and full of images, of Pagan deities, priests, and worshippers in the temples of Æsculapius and Diana. In this city, many Christians praised God by martyrdom.

*Thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith.* This praise of their constancy and faithfulness in such a place, and on the lips of the Lord, makes their virtue in our estimation of high worth and excellence. However, it does not appear to me, as if the Lord by these words, alluded only to the struggles of Paganism against Christianity; his expressions indicate a time, in which the purity of the christian doctrine was in great danger of being perverted, and particularly his name and faith. *His name* denotes the doctrine concerning his person and office, as the Son of God, and the Redeemer of the world. This they were very much in danger to deny, during the rage of Arianism, in which the orthodox Christians underwent severe trials and sufferings on account of their confession; especially in Africa, where the name of Christ, as being equal with the Father, and considered the Redeemer of mankind, had many martyrs. The *faith of Christ* here signifies his religion, the doctrine generally which he taught. To deny the religion of Christ, the gospel ministry also were in the greatest temptation during the reign of *Julian* the apostate, who reduced the Church to the brink of destruction by art and stratagem, which he carried on especially against the ministers with the utmost

bitterness, and at the same time, with the most consummate dexterity.

Verse 14. *But I have a few things against thee.* You suffer those without public reproof, which act the part of Balaam and Balak over again. He taught the Moabites an artifice, to unite Paganism with the worship of the true God, to please Balak against his better knowledge. And these endeavour from politic views to confound Heathenism with the Christian worship, in order to make Christianity palatable to the great ones of this world. They introduce Pagan rites and ceremonies under a Christian explanation, from motives of self-interest and a desire of power and dignity. The sons of Israel polluted themselves in the sight of God, by being caught in such stratagems, and what else can you expect now? It would however appear from comparing this text with the historical fact alluded to, Numbers xxxi. 16. that this attempt had been projected by some few lifeless Christian doctors, and prosecuted by the great ones among the Pagans, when the gospel ministry, as the proper guardians of the church, gave way and too much connived at the corruptions, till it was too late. But here is something, wherein they are still more culpable.

Verse 15. *So hast thou also* in your ministerial body them, that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes. This sect was founded in the second century by one Nicolaus, upon the principles of the Gnostics. They seem not to be the same with those mentioned in the charge to the Angel at Ephesus, or they were at least since that time reformed on a new principle. We know little of their doctrine or practice now; but they must have been licentious, since our blessed Lord mentions them with abhorrence.

Verse 16. *Repent.* Change your mind, reform your heart and practice, for you have hitherto been guilty of two great faults. You have been indifferent to preserve the Christian doctrine and worship in its pristine purity, as it

was delivered unto you by your predecessors, in regard to those who follow the artful scheme of Balaam; and you have not ex-communicated all such from the ministry and body of the Church, who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes. Rouse therefore, amend your ways, and attend to your duty with more diligence and faithfulness; or I will come quickly and purify you, by bringing judgment on those who make my religion an engine of state, and corrupt my doctrine for purposes of self-aggrandizement and worldly interest.

Verse 17. *To him that overcometh will I give.* Our blessed Lord considers the gospel ministry in these charges as a separate body, particularly consecrated to himself and appropriated to his use and purposes. They are therefore to be estimated in a double point of view. As Christians and members of the Church of Christ, they have a common interest in all the promises of God to his people; and as ministers of the gospel, they are to make peculiar sacrifices, for which they are promised a special reward, of which but little had been said in other parts of the New Testament as yet: the great Shepherd of souls, having allotted this place in his Apocalypse, more immediately to treat of their peculiar duties at the different periods of his Church, as also of the special recompence, which faithful and valiant combatants are to receive from his hands. The enemies with whom they were to enter the conflict at this period, were the followers of the artful schemes and stratagems of Balaam and Balak, and the adherents to the doctrine and vain philosophy of the Nicolaitanes. This temptation was a general one to the whole body of the gospel ministry—they had all to engage in this conflict. For only times of general temptation and peril, are here taken notice of. And now behold the goodness of their great Captain, in the promised reward to him that overcometh. Though they fell, if they only rose again; though they received many a wound, if only they overcame at last—



their recompense is an invaluable treasure, consisting in the following particulars.

*Hidden manna.* This denotes spiritual manna, not such as the children of Israel eat in the wilderness, which they could see; this is hid from the sight of man, and preserved for particular persons, who deny all worldly preferments and sensual pleasure, from a pure love to Christ and for his sake. It is the doctrine and spirit of Christ, which nourishes the soul unto eternal life; but this promise here refers to a more exalted state of happiness in the enjoyment of Christ, yet future and hidden in the world to come. Hebrew ix. 3. xiii. 9, 10.

*A white stone.* It was customary with the ancients to vote by white or coloured stones in criminal prosecutions, in the Olympic games, and in elections to offices of high honour and profit. The white stone always expressed the affirmative, in favour of the criminal, the victor, or candidate on these occasions. He who gained the victory in the Olympic games received an inscription on his white stone, by which he was entitled to certain privileges of honour, office or emolument, in preference to others of his fellow citizens. The promise of the Lord under this figure, therefore denotes a full absolution on the day of judgment, and a legal right to peculiar privileges in heaven. But this is not all yet.

*A new name.* This cannot mean the common title of "children of God,"; which all receive in the new birth, who truly experience that great change of heart and mind. Neither does it refer to any of those privileges, which believers enjoy in this world; for the word *δωσω*, *I will give*, in the original is the future tense, and the whole promise refers to the future world. *ὄνομα*, *name*, here signifies *office, station, and dignity*, to which they shall be entitled in the kingdom of Christ. This sense of the word *καινον*, is not new. In the opinion of the Orientals every spirit, angel, soul or demon has a name in the invisible

world, expressive of his office or employment. Hence they speak of many names in heaven and the inferior regions, as so many offices held by the inhabitants there; where all engaged in the same object, are of the same name. The word *καλόν*, *new*, denotes excellence, and expresses the eminence of their station. And of great distinction it will be indeed: for the Lord even saith, that no man knoweth that state of glory, saving he that receiveth it. The meaning of these words may be, that their state of glory, and office in the future world is inconceivable now; or the sense may be, that it is of such a nature and distinction, as not to be known to others even in the regions of bliss.

In this charge the great Shepherd and Bishop of souls seems to have his eye fixed on that change of the Christian doctrine and mode of worship, brought about by the preposterous endeavours of a lifeless clergy, since the beginning of the fourth century. It began by pious frauds under the auspicious protection of Constantine, the first Christian emperor, when numbers of impostors began to practise the impositions of the Heathen priest, upon the ignorant and credulous multitude, by spreading rumours of prodigies, selling fictitious relics, and deceiving the eyes of the populace with ludicrous combats with evil spirits or genii, in order to allure the Pagans. Yea they soon went so far, as to adopt Pagan rites and ceremonies into the Christian worship, to facilitate the conversion of the Heathen, and gain the esteem of the great, rich, and powerful, who still held their offices, and followed the worship of Idols, in every part of the empire. hTis ostentatious worship laid the foundation to the following reign of superstition and spiritual tyranny in Christendom, which is still kept up and defended, both in the Roman Catholic and Greek churches to this day. By this deplorable change, the Christian religion was wounded in its very essence, and the worship of God eclipsed in all its lustre. All this, those desirous of convincing themselves may easily see, by comparing the present mode of worship in those churches,

with the one instituted in the New Testament. See Mosheim's Eccl. Hist. C. W. F. Walch. Gibbon.

The Lord also soon began to fight against these churches, by the invasions of the German and other nations into the western part of the Roman empire : the Vandals in Africa, and the Mahometan and Turkish wars against the Greek and Latin churches for many centuries. And by these calamities the candlestick of the Greek church, was soon almost totally removed out of its place ; and the final doom of the Roman Jezebel is yet to come.

## A PASTORAL CHARGE

### TO THE ANGEL AT THYATIRA.

18. And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write; these things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass;
19. I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first.
20. Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto Idols.
21. And I gave her space to repent for her fornication; and she repented not.
22. Behold I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds.
23. And I will kill her children with death; and all the Churches shall know that I am he, which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.
24. But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, [as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths o Satan, as they speak,] I will put upon you none other burden;
25. But that which ye have *already* hold fast till I come.



26. And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations:
27. And he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers; even as I received of my father.
28. And I will give him the morning star.
29. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the spirit saith unto the Churches.

Verse 18. *These things saith the Son of God.* Born of the father from all eternity; and according to his human nature, a creation in the womb of the virgin, merely by the almighty energy of the Holy Ghost—whom you know and whose authority you acknowledge. His eyes full of wrath, sparkle with a divine lustre like two flames of fire, because of the abominations which he sees arising in his Church. His feet like the most pure and refined metal, as burning in a furnace, will mark nations and empires with glowing coals as he passes forth. Habak. iii. 5.

Verse 19. *I know thy works.* I have inspected all your different offices, the persons who fill them, and their manner of administration, and will now tell you the sentiments of my heart. See chap. ii. 9.

*Charity.* The original ἀγάπην, signifies both *love* and *charity*, as the one is the tree, and the other the fruit. The Lord means to say: I approve of the love to God and men, which fills thy heart and is the chief motive of thy actions. Such a disposition will always disclose itself by charitable actions, in which the first Christians particularly abounded. Every congregation had its deacons, and many also their deaconesses, whose offices were to administer the gifts and oblations to the poor and needy; and these appointments have been well supplied for many centuries. But not only the deacons believed it incumbent on themselves to search for the poor and sick, that might be in want; also the ministry considered it their duty, under

whose directions the deacons officiated. They here receive the Lord's approbation.

*Service.* Διακονίαν, *office of the gospel ministry.* Thus I translate this word here, though it may signify all the different offices in the Church. The word *charity* seems to comprise those servants of the Church, whose offices consisted in administering to the bodily wants of the poor, the sick, the orphans, the widows, &c. and *service*, the ministry of the word, whose business it was variously to instruct the people, and supply the spiritual wants of their souls. In this sense, even the apostles are called deacons, 2 Cor. vi. 4. Eph. iii. 7. Coloss. i. 23; and their office a deaconship.

*Thy faith, and thy patience.* The word πίστις, *faith*, ought to have been translated here, *faithfulness*, integrity, in the performance of the duties appertaining to the different offices; and ὑπομονή, *patience*, denotes the continued resolution to oppose the attacks of the enemies of souls, and to stay their progress even under many sufferings.

*And thy works; and the last to be more than the first.* As these words stand, the expression, "*and thy works*," would be only a needless repetition of the first sentence in this verse. But the whole translation is faulty, and the semicolon placed amiss. See the note on the word ἔργον, verse 2. καὶ τὰ ἔργα σου, καὶ τὰ ἔσχατα πλείονα τῶν πρώτων, *and your last offices, which are more, than the first.* At the time, to which this charge alludes, the government of the Church had already undergone a great change, since the time of Christ and his apostles. Constantine the great, had modelled its ancient form in many respects according to the constitution of the Roman empire, which necessarily introduced, among the different orders of the ministry, many new degrees of rank and eminence. Some also were introduced from pride, and others from necessity, as the Church extended her banners, and the congregations grew more numerous and opulent. They now had

patriarchs, exarchs, metropolitans, archbishops, bishops, &c. and the Church at Constantinople had no less than one hundred deacons. All this I have observed says the Lord, and inspected their administrations :

Verse 20. *But I have against thee, that thou sufferest that woman Jezebel.* There certainly was no Jezebel at Thyatira, as some ancient expositors, supposed from this passage. This is a figurative expression, by which the Lord alludes to a woman of far more importance. Jezebel was the wife of Ahab, 1 Kings xvi. She established the idolatrous worship of Baal, in the very heart of the Church of the Old Testament, and killed the prophets of Jehovah in such numbers, that Elijah laments, he was only remaining. Jezebel assumed and exercised the highest civil and ecclesiastic authority, contrary to the custom and the express laws of the state, by a criminal negligence and condescension of her husband, the king. And can the antitype and thing signified be of less importance than its shadow? Let us note her actions and the different traits of her character, by which she stands distinguished, and then see, who this Jezebel is.

1. Jezebel was the wife of Ahab, a stranger at first, and daughter to the king at Sidon. She no doubt had once forsaken her idolatrous worship, and embraced the religion of the people of God; since the laws of the Jewish state did not admit, to marry strange and idolatrous women.

2. She returned again to her former worship of Baal, and grasping the supreme power of Church and state, in a criminal manner, persecuted the worshippers of Jehovah, and killed his prophets.

3. To this the Lord adds; she calleth herself a prophetess and teaches doctrines, by which she seduces the servants of Christ—*a.* To commit fornication—*b.* To eat things sacrificed unto Idols.

4. She committed fornication herself, and others adultery with her.

We all know, that it is customary in prophetic and figurative language, to represent a Church by the emblem of a woman. Thus the Church of God is represented as a chaste woman, and idolatrous Churches by prostitutes, in numerous places of scripture. Isaiah liv. 6. Jer. iii. 1. Ezekiel xxiii. 2. xvi. 41. Hos. ii. 2. Rev. xii. 1. xix. 7. xxi. 9. xvii. 3, 4. This Jezebel therefore, must signify a certain separate religious society in Christendom, where-soever it exists, which bears the character above described, not only in farfetched similarities, but in an obvious and striking manner, and all united in that one body of people.

According to the series of prophetic views in these charges, we ought not look for this Jezebel before the commencement of the eighth century. Because the preceding charges take up that time in the following order :

I. The apostolic age, and falling from first love—to 104.

II. The period of the martyrs and persecution—to 324.

III. The period of confounding Paganism with Christians—to 700.

IV. The period of Jezebel's corruptions.

This then is the period of time, in which we must search the history of the Church for this Jezebel. And I would ask the accurate historian, what power, or religious society in all Christendom could the Lord have intended in this place, which would fully answer the above character, except the see of Rome?

I am even sorry to find so striking a resemblance between this Jezebel and a reverend bishop of a Christian society, whom otherwise I would desire to respect. But to sacrifice truth and duty to an ill timed charity, would only subject us to the same censure with the angel at Thyatira; whose great fault consisted in being too indifferent



to defend the truth in Jesus against error, and not bearing his testimony sufficiently loud and pointed against this woman, as the duties of his station required. He ought to have protested with a becoming zeal against every corruption of the religion of his Lord, without respect to persons, or to his own fame. The ignorant and deluded would probably have called him an uncharitable, restless and intolerant man: but what are all the accusations of an ungrateful world in matters of conscience. We have reason to fear, that the indifference of the present protestant Churches, concerning Popery and its corruptions, may afford them the praise of the world, but not of God. Many seem even ignorant of the depths of Satan, on which its foundation is laid. And we have all fallen short in this respect of the more glorious example of our first reformers.

But before I go a step farther, I will make a necessary distinction, which truth and charity require. By this woman Jezebel I do not understand the Roman Catholic community—not the private members of that Church, or the different congregations to which they belong, but the Papal see at Rome: and that only so far, and since it pretends to be an infallible authority, and the supreme head of the Church of Christ on earth, as a right derived from heaven. Otherwise the Roman church is respectable, though corrupted in doctrine and practice, far more than any of the Protestant churches; yet the Lord has many of his children and faithful witnesses in it, whom he will call from thence before the destruction of Jezebel. Rev. xviii. 4.

During the first century the bishop of Rome was considered inferior in point of eminence to the bishop at Jerusalem, that being the Mother-Church, and the apostolic pattern for imitation. And during the first three centuries he was no more than another bishop; except an assumed pre-eminence of order, on account of the respectability of the Church at Rome among the western churches. He was

exalted to the dignity of patriarch, at the same time, with the bishops of Antioch, and of Alexandria, by the council of Nice, A. D. 325, to which number, the council at Constantinople, A. D. 381, added also the bishop of that city—since it had become an established maxim in those days, to determine the precedence and authority of bishops over others, by the rank of the cities where they resided. Thus it remained to the close of the sixth century, during which the name and idea of *universal bishop* was held a mark of Antichrist. Nothing was known as yet, of the bishop of Rome's superiority in point of power, or of his since pretended infallibility; all his pre-eminence consisted in the pomp and splendour, that surround the Roman see, in which he surpassed all his brethren. He yet obtained his office by an election of the common people.

But a great change took place during the seventh century. Early in the commencement of it, these lordly prelates began to arrogate to themselves a pre-eminence over all others, under the pretence of being successors of St. Peter, and vicegerents of Christ on earth; though as yet chiefly in opposition to the patriarchs of Constantinople. The Papal supremacy, however, was first introduced by Boniface III, who engaged that abominable tyrant, Phocas, to confer the title of universal bishop upon the Roman pontiff; and this arrogant stride to title, all his successors endeavoured to improve into actual power. These ambitious views of the bishop at Rome, were for a long time opposed by emperors, princes, and whole nations, till the close of the seventh century. Since that time he was acknowledged by most of the Western churches as supreme head of the Roman Catholic party, and pretended to be exclusively, bishop of the world. By the famous donation of Pepin and other kings of France, since A. D. 753, he also became possessed of several important territories, and rose to the dignity of a sovereign among the princes

of the world; which largely supported the see, in its aspiring views to ecclesiastic supremacy. This authority they now laboured to enlarge and confirm, by encroachments upon the rights and jurisdiction of inferior ecclesiastics, so as to make them dependent on the Papal chair, and by attaching the whole body of the monks to their service. And in order to complete this vast scheme of establishing a spiritual monarchy on a lasting foundation, the bishops of Rome, by a criminal negligence and condescension of the kings and princes, grasped also the right of investiture; the confirmation of the newly elected ecclesiastics; the disposal of the most profitable benefices and prebendaries. By this additional power, their authority and influence rose to an enormous pitch. They held the life-strings of the whole body of the clergy in their hands, and were perfectly sovereign. See Professor Walch's Hist. of the Popes.

Thus this Roman Jezebel rose into existence. And now we will compare her actions and character, with the prophetic description before us. Popery,

I. Is of Heathen extraction, begotten of the *pontifex Maximus*, or supreme priest of Paganism in the Roman empire, of whose office rights and privileges, this is an imitation. Constantine the Great, had already begun to model the administration of the Church after the constitution of the Roman empire, by creating four patriarchs, or visible heads of the Church, in imitation of his *four praetorian prefects*. But the Roman bishop grasped the power and eminence of the supreme priest, in which he was much supported and assisted by the Pagan notions, rites and ceremonies already blended with christianity. Of this, Popery stands convicted, both by history and the New Testament.

II. Where will the accurate historian find another power in all Christendom, beside this Pâpal hierarchy, which es-

ablished itself by the guilty negligence of the rulers of this world, and by a criminal assumption of civil and ecclesiastic supremacy in the very heart of the Church of Christ? Like Jezebel of old, Popery fell in love with the kings and great ones of the world, at a time, when the love of Christ had died away in the hearts of many. It formed extensive connexions, solely from a desire of power, and views of self-aggrandizement. They both obtained it, and were tyrants.

III. Where is there such a mixed power of civil and ecclesiastic authority, as the kings in Israel possessed, which exercised such tyranny against the faithful servants of the Lord, in order to establish a false and idolatrous worship? History is full of the inhuman persecutions which the Papal hierarchy carried on against the very best of Christians. Let it suffice to mention only the Albigenses, Waldenses, Vallenses in France and in Italy, and the Protestants to this day. Her cup is to all appearance not yet full; though her end will be Jezebel-like, of which we have already seen the prognostics. But we must proceed to what the Lord had said about her.

IV. This apocalyptic Jezebel is not only a woman, (a church) she pretends to be a prophetess also; just as the Pope in his college of cardinals calls himself the Church, exclusively, even of the Roman Catholic community, and sole tutoress of the world. A prophet, in the New Testament sense of the word, is *a divinely authorized teacher, who was to discourse publicly upon the various points of Christian doctrine, and to guide and direct the people as clothed by divine authority.* The Papal chair at Rome arrogantly professed every item of this definition, since the commencement of the ninth century, to which no other Church in Christendom has ever attempted to pretend. The wisest and most impartial Roman Catholic writers acknowledge, that from the time of *Lewis the Meek*, the ancient form of church government was greatly



changed in Europe by the Roman pontiff, and new laws substituted in their place. Among these, the spiritual supremacy of this arrogant bishop was of first importance. They had long pretended to this authority, but now they began to exercise it in full vigour. It was zealously urged, *that the Roman pontiff was constituted and appointed by Jesus Christ, supreme legislator and judge of the Church universal, and that this right was conveyed to him by St. Peter, the prince of the apostles.* Hence they also contended that the bishops, and the whole body of the clergy derived all their authority from that chair, and neither synods, nor even general councils could determine any thing without its consent. He presumed to be the sole standard of explaining the Scriptures by his tradition, and decreed articles of faith; and decided all controversies in matters of religion and equity.

And what good has this Papal Jezebel done after all these extraordinary pretensions? The Lord accuses her of seducing his servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed to Idols. These words are probably to be taken in a figurative sense, to denote that preposterous rage of the Roman pontiffs for image-worship to which they have seduced all Europe since the commencement of the seventh century. For, in prophetic language, fornication often denotes idolatry. And to partake in idolatrous rites and ceremonies, may be signified by eating things sacrificed to Idols. But these expressions need not to be taken in a figurative sense, they are even accomplished in their literal meaning. Ever since the Papal chair has established the celibacy of priests, great numbers of that body were seduced at first, to live like many of the Popes themselves, in concubinage, and afterwards in the most scandalous debaucheries. The doctrine itself is of Heathen origin, and founded at first on a superstitious opinion prevalent in the third century, that those who led a conju-

gal life, were of all others the most subject to the influence of malignant dæmons. The Popes, however, urged this doctrine from motives of self-aggrandizement, as this was a most effectual measure, to subject the whole body of ecclesiastics solely to the interest and service of the Roman see. They likewise lived and supported themselves by the things sacrificed to images, and the traffic that was carried on in relics of saints, and by superstition. Thus the servants of the Lord in that Church were drawn aside and corrupted by deceptive doctrine, as the word to seduce, signifies.

Verse 21. *And I gave her space to repent.* Καὶ ἔδωκα αὐτῇ χρόνον ἵνα μετανοήσῃ, should be rendered: *And I have given her a chronon of time, that she might repent.* I take a chronos in the Revelation to be a time of 1100 years. If this period is to be computed, from the time when the Roman see entered into close connexion with the rulers of France, by whose assistance its pontiffs were afterwards raised to sovereign majesty; then the final doom and bed of this Roman Jezebel would be about A. D. 1840. For Gregory III, began this connexion, A. D. 740, by a splendid embassy to Charles Martel, with an infamous promise to withdraw himself and the city of Rome from their allegiance to the Roman emperor, in case of his assistance; whom he bitterly hated, on account of his opposition to image worship. See Walch's Hist. of the Popes.

*Of her fornication.* πορνεία, ὅς περᾶω, to carry over in order to sell, to carry merchandize. This word does not denote merely a single instance of this enormous crime, but a general manner of living, and that of the worst kind; it signifies the trade of a prostitute, who receives men for money; and for the sake of gain, entices and allures even those in conjugal life, to commit adultery. It is worthy of remark that she is said to commit *fornica-*

tion—and those who cohabit with her, are charged with *adultery*. The first is the same act of an unmarried person, the last of one in lawful wedlock. The Lord hereby informs us, that he never stood in any connexion with Popery, or that he never considered this Jezebel his spouse; but the Catholic community, in as far as it is not Papal, not Roman, is still considered a Church of Christ, the ministers of which break the bonds of union between them and their heavenly Lord, by entering so far into the spirit of Popery, as to promote its propagation. She is here represented, Jezebel like, as a woman of great art, who seduces both by her alluring pleasures, and compelling power. Her pleasures are all bottomed on self-interest, being objects of avarice, of pride and earthly happiness; and her threats misery, pain and death. By these means she seduces the servants of the Lord to commit this crime with herself, by deifying her own person, and inducing all her connexions to pay her divine honours, and also to submit to all her institutions as of divine authority.

Verse 22—23. Here the Lord threatens to bring judgment on her, on them that commit adultery with her, and on her children. Jezebel of old, was thrown down from her window, where her flesh was eaten by dogs. 2 Kings ix, 33—37. This was a signal judgment of God. Popery will meet with one equally rigorous. From her downy *sofa of pleasure*, on which she has captivated by her charms and intrigues, and enraptured her lovers for a whole chronos, the Lord will cast her into a *sick bed of great pain and affliction*. Her paramours, who forsook the Lord and committed adultery with her, are the college of cardinals, the higher clerical orders and prebendaries, who enter into the life and spirit of the Roman see, and enjoyed her pleasures and benefits; and those rulers of the world, who have supported her in her aspiring views, and persecu-

tions against the servants and witnesses of the Lord. They shall also be cast into the same bed of tribulation and distress with her; part of which we have now seen during these sanguinary revolutions in Europe, but the dregs of the Lord's cup are yet to come. Ps. lxxv. 8.

The Lord seems to have this woman and her transactions during many centuries before his eyes; for he also speaks of her children. These are *not* the Christian churches and congregations under the government of Popery. Charity requires to make this Christian distinction. Her children are the *different monastic orders*, formed for her support, and after her spirit and image; and those missionary societies in protestant and other Christian countries, who use all their endeavours to extend the banners and authority of the Pope, among the true worshippers of Jesus Christ. The Lord will *kill them with death*, if they do not repent. This manner of expression always denotes sudden death, by signal judgments from heaven: such as earthquakes, epidemic diseases, sanguinary revolutions, or the desolations of a blood-thirsty tyrant. The accomplishment of this dire sentence will carry such evident marks of a divine and special judgment, that all the churches in the different parts of Christendom at that time, shall thereby know the hand of the Lord Jesus. It probably terminates in that great harvest, Rev. xiv. 15; in which also many children of God are gathered into the heavenly garner, but in a very different manner, from the children of Jezebel.

Verse 24. *But unto you I say, and unto the rest at Thyatira.* The Lord makes a remarkable distinction in the body of the ministry at Thyatira. They are divided into the following three classes: 1. The woman Jezebel, and her lovers and children. 2. The angel. 3. The rest at Thyatira.



I. *This woman and her connexions* have been sufficiently described. According to prophecy they will once more arise to a considerable power in Christendom, and for a short time, exercise great tyranny and persecution, chiefly against the Protestants, before she receives her final doom by the hand of the Lord. Her course is now nearly run, and her last elevation at hand; after which she shall oppose the Church of Christ no more.

II. *The angel*—The acknowledged gospel ministry of Jesus Christ in his Church at the time, to which this charge refers. Their general character, the Lord has given in the 19th verse, of which they all partook, more or less, in the performance of their official duties. This angel is twice addressed in the *plural number*, verse 23, and 24; in order to show, that he is *a moral representative of many*. He is here described, as being in the presence of this idolatrous woman, who profited much by his remissness in duty, though he himself remained faithful to the Lord.

III. *The rest at Thyatira*.—Are also ministers of the true and uncorrupted gospel of Jesus; for they are said, *to have not this doctrine*, and did not know the deep schemes of Satan in the establishment of this woman, and her train of corruptions, or no doubt, they would have borne a more effectual testimony against her. They are here represented as in no connexion with the woman, and as of a distinct party from the angel also; for *λοιπός* from *λείπω*, signifies the *forsaken*, the *missing*, the *removed*, h. e. from the ruling church-power. The Lord mentions them with such approbation, that we may well feel interested to ask: who can they be? I cannot help seeing here that host of ancient witnesses, who according to Mosheim, have since the seventh century, either withdrawn from the ruling Church on account of the vices of the clergy, the ambitious projects of the Roman pontiffs, and the corruptions

of religion ; or were driven away by persecution in almost every country of Christendom, but particularly from those, under the jurisdiction of the aspiring bishop at Rome. Though their persecutors, and afterwards the inquisition, charged them with ignorance, and blackened their confession of faith, by accusations evidently false ; yet even their enemies acknowledged the sincerity of their piety, wherever they were truly known. They kept themselves concealed at first, in order to be screened from persecution, but when in succeeding time they collected into settlements and formed congregations, their enemies stigmatized them with many names, viz. such as : Vallenses, Albingenses, Waldenses, Paterini, Cathari, Bulgarians, the Brethren of the free Spirit, Beghards, &c. &c. &c. Many of these people were indeed men of whom the world was not worthy, a holy seed of the Lord, wherever their pilgrimage was destined ; for they were rarely suffered to remain long unmolested in the same place, though always better Christians than their persecutors.

And here perhaps is a suitable place to determine with more precision, whom we are most properly to understand by the angel in each of these charges, and by the Churches to which they belong. The true answer to this inquiry is of no small importance in the explanation of these charges, and of great moment in theology in our days, where so many sects and churches in Christendom claim this prerogative exclusively for themselves, and condemn others. Let us for a moment compare all these charges, and upon a review of the whole, the Lord will probably himself satisfy our wishes. By comparing text with text, we shall be the less liable to fall into error. It is evident, that these angels are not the moral representatives

I. Of all the Christian ministry of every sect and party throughout Christendom. For the Lord himself distin-

guishes at Ephesus between the angel and the false apostles; at Smyrna, between him and the false Jews; at Pergamos, he protests against the followers of the doctrine of Balaam and the Nicolaitanes; at Thyatira, against the whore Jezebel; and whatever the Lord separates, we have no right to join. All these heretics and corrupters of the pure religion of Jesus are by these protestations excommunicated from his Church, and absolutely cut off like withered branches, from the body of his people. When the Lord pronounces excommunication, we must not expect to hear Papal curses and anathemas, a simple expression of his divine displeasure is quite sufficient.

II. Not of all the faithful servants of Christ in his vineyard, because he evidently distinguishes at Pergamos, between the angel and Antipas, [ex ἀντί et πᾶς, antipode, one directly opposite to us;] who also appears to be a moral representative of the first Christian ascetics and hermits, of the second and third century. They followed what they called an extraordinary rule of sanctity, abstained from wine, flesh, matrimony and commerce, and applied themselves wholly to solitude, contemplation, and devotion, in order to have communion with God in Christ. They aimed to live above nature and the rule of life, as they said, given to the vulgar, and are therefore denominated Antipas, or Antipodes. Though they followed an erroneous opinion of those days, and led severe and austere lives; yet history testifies their true piety, and readiness to become confessors or martyrs for their Saviour's cause. The Lord also plainly distinguishes at Thyatira, between the angel and the *rest*; and at Sardis, the *few names*, which he had left there. Both were collective bodies of faithful ministers of Christ, who receive praise and promises, without the least censure or blame, and yet not numbered with the angels there.

III. Nor of the faithful ministry of Christ only—because the angel at Sardis had the name only of being alive, and in reality was dead; and he at Laodicea was lukewarm, and even worse than cold, and therefore the Lord was ready to spue him out of his mouth as a nauseating morsel.

IV. Neither the ministry of those churches only, which are acknowledged by public authority, and sanctioned by civil law. Because this was not the case with the angel at Ephesus and Smyrna, both were persecuted by public authority in Judea and throughout the whole Roman empire, to the year A. D. 324. The Church and the commonwealth are politics specifically and essentially different.

There is no doubt but these angels hold the *only true succession* of the gospel ministry of Christ on earth, and the proper lineage of spiritual power and privilege to the stewardship of the mysteries and manifold grace of God. 1 Cor. iv. 1. It therefore highly concerns us to inquire, whom these angels represent, and where we are to meet the true Church of Christ, and its gospel ministry. This subject will according to prophecy, be one day made a matter of greater moment in Christendom; and that in all probability soon.

V. Not of the ruling church power, as such, or the higher ranks of ecclesiastics at those different periods, in any country. For since the time of Constantine the Great, those, whose duty it was to shine like stars of the first magnitude, have generally been the very persons who led the van among the temporisers with the world, and too often themselves corrupted the religion of our blessed Lord and Master. How many might we name from history, who, from views of self-aggrandizement and secular interest, have proved greatly unfaithful at last. This is evident from the history of the Roman Jezebel, which has



had the power for many centuries, and done so much mischief to the cause of Christ. It is equally true, more or less of every established community in preference to others throughout Christendom.

VI. The great question then at last is, whom do these angels more particularly represent? And where shall we meet their Churches? They certainly represent a successive ministry of the Lord's own institution, regularly set apart in his Church, and ordained to be delegates and ambassadors by his authority and in his name to the churches. They are also represented in these charges, as being vested with a standing power of governing the Church under his inspection, and as servants of the Lord, who continue to administer and preserve the means of grace in purity and without essential corruption, till he cometh again in glory. Where can we meet this succession and that power of church government, which Jesus Christ himself received from the Father; John xx. 21. and vested in his apostles, with authority to convey it down by a successive ministry to the period of the Church at Laodicea? After all the attention I am able to pay this subject, in considering these charges, the following is the result.

These angels are not the moral representatives of the ruling church power, *as such*, at these seven different periods of the Church of Christ,—*but of that part of the Christian ministry, who remain to officiate as actual members of those ruling communities, and continue faithful to the confession of the pure doctrine of the gospel, both as to faith and worship, without participating in any essential corruptions that may be introduced during their time.*

Those who withdraw from these communities of their own accord, and, without a special call of Providence, hide themselves behind the scene of action, loose their right and place in this ministerial succession. To turn the back upon the enemy for fear of a conflict in so good a cause as the religion of Christ, is a great sin indeed. Rev. xxi, 8.

The Protestant reformers were none of these. They neither feared persecution, sufferings nor death; at least Luther was driven away by Papal excommunication, and God accomplished his work through him, without any such important intentions on his part at first. They did not leave the Church of Christ, for they retained all the doctrine and worship of the Saviour's institution, and are therefore acknowledged his ministry under the angel at Philadelphia: they only left a heretical church power, which as such, had lost the right of ministerial succession. For he who makes an unscriptural doctrine his chief object and rallying point of union for his sect, is a teacher of heresy and no longer a pastor in Christ's Church; though many of his adherents for want of knowledge, may on that account be far less culpable in the sight of the Lord, than he is himself.

3. The distinguishing criterion, by which the Lord designates his visible Church, and by which also we may find it amidst the cry of so many parties, Lo, here is Christ! undoubtedly is, purity of doctrine, both as to faith and practice, and the administration of the sacraments, agreeably to the institution of the Lord. According to this criterion, which is also sanctioned, Acts ii, 42, *That community is a Church of Christ, and part of the house of eternal wisdom built on seven pillars (Prov. 9.) which makes solemn and public confession of the doctrine and worship of Christ, and continues stedfastly in the fellowship of the apostles and their successors, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.* Wherever we meet this mark of distinction, whether they be single persons in corrupt communities, or whole Churches under solemn profession in the world, there is the *lineage* of the wife of the Lamb, and the true *succession* of the gospel ministry among the clergy of such a Church.

Verse 24. *I will put upon you none other burden. The angel and the rest at Thyatira had burden enough in be-*

ing surrounded by the woman Jezebel and her adherents ; the Lord offers them this comfort, that all further sufferings shall be dispensed with on that account.

Verse 25. *That which ye have, hold fast.* That portion of my doctrine and worship among you, hold fast. You will be under continual temptation of loosing it ; therefore watch and pray, make use of your spiritual weapons and powers, to preserve it, as a great treasure. This is also addressed to the rest at Thyatira.

*Till I come.* This declaration of the second advent of Christ is here mentioned for the first time in these charges, and indicates that this branch of the gospel ministry in the midst of this corrupted Church, shall continue till the Lord comes. He tells the angel at Ephesus, that he would come to remove his candlestick, and to him at Pergamos, he would come and fight against the Balaamites ; both these declarations denote special judgments ; but the words here evidently signify reward, which both the gospel ministry and the rest at Thyatira shall receive, when he comes.

Verse 26. *And he that overcometh and keepeth my works.* The Greek text is, as follows: Καὶ ὁ νικῶν, καὶ ὁ τηρῶν τὰ ἔργα μου, which should be translated thus: *And he that overcometh, and he that keepeth my offices ;* where the word τηρεῖν signifies to *keep by guard, preserve, retain*, and always expresses carefulness and circumspection. For my translation of the word ἔργα, vide chapter ii, 2. By these words the Lord describes two different kinds of people, and their best efforts towards performing the duties incumbent on them ; who also in the following words receive a twofold promise, in case of a faithful performance.

The words, "*he that overcometh,*" certainly refer to the angel at Thyatira, h. e. to that branch of the gospel ministry, which still continues in the Roman Catholic church who, surrounded by the corruptions, temptations and ty-

ranny of Jezebel, are here encouraged in the conflict, to remain true and faithful unto the end.

But the words, “and he that keepeth, guardeth, preserveth my offices,” refer to the *rest* at Thyatira, i. e. the Vallenses, Abigenses, Waldenses, and that host of ancient witnesses against Pöpery and the corruptions of the Church in doctrine and worship, during the dark centuries. It is worthy of remark, that these pious servants of the Lord at first principally withdrew, or were driven away from the Roman church community, on account of the Papal innovations in church government; partly by its own ambitious endeavours after power, secular possessions and worldly grandeur; and partly by introducing a multiplicity of new offices, in order to multiply and enrich a vicious and corrupt clergy. These pious people themselves, wherever they collected and formed congregations of their own, always established and preserved the apostolic form of church government, which the Lord here calls *his offices*, by way of approbation, and because the apostles acted according to the direction of his spirit. The Lord animates them to use all diligence and care, in preserving their excellent church discipline, and to administer those offices well.

*Power over the nations.* The promise is also two fold. That branch of the gospel ministry of Christ in the Roman Catholic community which overcometh, is here promised a great harvest among the Heathen. The original word *ἐξουσία*, signifies both the privilege of doing a thing, and the power necessary to its performance—it also denotes royal distinction and dignity. At the commencement of the Millennium, when that Church is reformed upon the principles of the pure religion of Christ, and purged of Jezebel and all her train of corruptions, a large door will be opened to her missionaries among the Heathen nations. She will send forth noble ambassadors of Jesus,



men endowed with power from above, and qualified for this work ; and the Pagans will receive them with a reverence and distinction, due to the first citizen of the empire. The word ποιμαίνω, which is here given to *rule*, also signifies to *pasture*, to *reign*, to *govern*, and indicates civil and spiritual government ; for the Lord himself explains it in that way, by adding : ὡς καὶ γὰρ ἐίληφα, *as also I have received of my father*. Ps. ii. 8. They are not to be principals in this government over the nations ; they are only promised to be his colleagues, as members of his spiritual body, 1 Cor. vi. 2, 3 ; and how great is even this promise ! The Roman Catholic church is even now furnished with more funds and subjects for missionary purposes, than all the rest of Christendom together ; but they want *purity of doctrine* and *worship*, *spirit* and *zeal* for the undertaking. Her present missionaries are chiefly employed to extend the power of the Pope and the banners of their own order. But in those days all impediments will be removed, and they shall be chief instruments in the hands of the Lord, to bring in the fullness of the Gentiles.

Verse 27. *With a rod of iron*. Those who willingly submit, will be led in green pastures, and led beside the still waters of gospel grace ; but the stiff-necked and rebellious shall be broken as the vessels of a potter to shivers. A sword is the weapon against an enemy, but a rod is the instrument to punish capital transgressors against the laws of the state. To rule with a rod of iron, denotes a strong and energetic government. To be employed abroad in the king's service is great honour, to be employed in the cabinet denotes still more abilities and confidence ; but to be the wife of the Lamb is happiness indeed.

Verse 28. *The morning star*. This is a special promise to the *rest* at Thyatira. The sense is : with you the day of my kingdom shall first open ; the harbinger of my second advent will first appear among you, and you will rejoice in his approach.

## CHAPTER III.

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### A PASTORAL CHARGE TO THE ANGEL AT SARDIS.

Verse 1. And unto the angel of the Church in Sardis write ; these things saith he that hath the seven spirits of God, and the seven stars ; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.

- 2 Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die ; for I have not found thy works perfect before God.
3. Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.
4. Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments ; and they shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy.
5. He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment ; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but will confess his name before my father, and before his angels.
6. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches.

This charge is given to the gospel ministry of the Greek church, and comprehends that body of men from the time of the great and fatal schism between the Eastern and Western Churches, to the commencement of the Millennium. Those well acquainted with the internal state of the Eastern churches since that time, will readily admit, that it contains a faithful and applicable description of their general character, even to the present day. I presume

that Dr. Young, alias Stilling, is under a mistake, when he explains this charge to the angel at Sardis, as also referring to the Latin church; since that community beyond all doubt, has already been the subject of the former charge, for the following reason. By that call on our particular attention, to what the Spirit saith in the Churches, these seven charges are divided into two parts. The three first stand peculiarly connected among themselves, by bearing that remarkable form of expression in front of the promise annexed to each charge; and concern the ministry of the general Church of Christ, before it was rent into different communities. The four last charges are again united, by having this call to attention annexed after the promise, and at the end of each pastoral letter; because they refer to the gospel ministry of four distinct Churches, and each charge is addressed, to a particular ministerial succession in one of these communities. No impartial historian can doubt, but that the Western clergy made the first schism in the Church, by suffering that woman Jezebel to rise and establish herself among them, in the power of the Pope. For this reason the first of these four last charges is, in the order of prophecy, as well as of things, addressed to that ministerial succession; and the one now under consideration to the angel at Sardis, concerns the ministry of the Eastern church exclusively, as also its contents will evince and verify.

Verse 1. *He that hath the seven spirits of God.* The reason, why the Holy Ghost is here represented by these seven spirits, is neither obvious, nor probably within the limits of human research. By this representation the Lord may refer to his peculiar mode of existence in the Godhead, or to his manner of communicating himself to the Churches in a sevenfold influence on the human soul. But there is certainly a particular motive, why the Lord declares to the angel at Sardis, and to him especially, that

He had the seven spirits of God. It is notorious, that the separation of the Greek and Latin churches was indeed begun by the aspiring views and haughty conduct of the Roman pontiffs, towards the patriarchs of the Eastern churches; but this was by no means the only cause. The breach was still widened by that famous and unhappy contest about image-worship, and the procession of the Holy Ghost *from the Son*. This the Eastern bishops denied, and charged the Latins with heresy, and with the crime of having corrupted the creed of Constantinople; by adding the words *filio que*, i. e. *and from the Son*, without authority. The Greek church has ever since asserted this doctrine, that the Holy Ghost proceeded from the Father only; and therefore the Lord here declares to his ministry in that community, in order to rectify their confession, *that He also hath the seven spirits of God, as well as the Father.*

*I know thy works, &c. &c.* The last part of this verse should be rendered thus: *I have inspected thy offices: though thou hast a form as if thou livedst, yet thou art dead.* For this sense of the word, *ὄνομα*, see Hypom. Ernest. in loco, and for my translation of *ὄτι*, Glassius, and Math. v, 17. Here the Lord describes the character of his ministry in the Grecian church—a lamentable picture indeed, but notoriously true, even to the present day. For many centuries already, that Church has been covered according to the best authorities, with a thick and gloomy veil of ignorance and superstition, and its guardians, or priesthood has been equally destitute of knowledge and vital religion. Though there were at all times a few judicious and pious servants of Jesus among them, yet the generality placed the whole of religion in a laborious round of rites and ceremonies, and knew very little of the life and power of godliness in the soul of man.

*Thou hast a form*, saith the Lord—a liturgy, a Church government, a round of external services in worship, which



makes a good appearance, and produces you the name among the congregations of being my ministry. Those who can see no further than the surface, may judge, that also your souls were alive to God and to my cause in them; but my eye has penetrated this veil of hypocrisy, and my judgment differs widely from that of unenlightened reason.

*Thou art dead*, a lifeless corpse, a body of unregenerated men, not quickened by the spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead. Your heart is unchanged, your reason not illuminated from above; you only understand the external meaning of the Scriptures by means of human learning, and not that which is spiritually discerned, and gives life, energy and activity to the soul. Therefore you want zeal, and all your labours are void of spiritual success and blessing among the sons and daughters of men.

Verse 2. *Be watchful.* γίνε γρηγορῶν, *Be thou awakened*, from thy spiritual sleep, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light, Eph. v. 14. By the original the Lord commands him to awaken from his state of sloth and carelessness, to a sense of duty; but our common version refers more particularly to the duty of remaining in a state of watchfulness. A man must first awake to a sense of his danger, before he is capable of guarding against the enemy of souls.

*And strengthen the things which remain, &c.* Καὶ ἰσχυρίξον τὰ λοιπὰ ἃ μέλλει ἀποθανεῖν. *And support the forsaken, which are ready to die.* See Pasor's Lex. and Kypke in loco, τὰ λοιπὰ, τὰς λοιπὰς (πάντας) reliqua, i. e. reliquos omnes. The Church at Sardis contains three sorts of people: 1. The angel, or properly acknowledged gospel ministry, who are the immediate subjects of this charge. 2. The rest, the forsaken, the removed. 3. The few names, which the angel at Sardis had; by which we may understand the ministry of separate parties, who yet remained under the jurisdiction of the Grecian church. By these λοιπὰ, *the rest, the forsaken or removed*, I understand such

as had been excommunicated by the ministry of the Greek church, forsaken and persecuted against the will and pleasure of the Lord ; among which the falsely accused Paulicians hold a chief place. I know the prejudices, which have been handed down in church histories from Greek authors, respecting this Christian and pious society of men ; but I am also convinced from reading Gibbon on the decline and fall of the Roman empire, that these Greeks, their inveterate enemies, are bad authorities in this case. This society was formed by a certain *Constantine*, at Manalis, beyond Samosata, in the seventh century, and at first consisted chiefly of those Gnostics and Manicheans, who during the first centuries of the Christian æra, had been driven to the banks of the river Euphrates. Constantine preferred the writings of the Apostle Paul, and adopted them as his particular rule of faith and practice ; and hence their name of Paulicians. This society soon extended itself over all the provinces of Asia Minor to the Euphrates, and established numerous congregations throughout all Armenia. They were founded in the true spirit of Christianity, and flourished as a garden of the Lord, until the Grecian emperors Constans, Justinian II, Leo the Isaurian, the empress Theodora and others, with a corrupt and restless priesthood, began to persecute them with a degree of bitterness and barbarity, horrible beyond expression. During the reign of Theodora only, more than 100,000 suffered martyrdom, by every kind of tortures ; because they would not return to the bosom of a corrupted Church, and submit to the tyranny of a worldly minded priesthood. In order to get rid of these sincere disciples of Jesus, who had become troublesome to a lifeless and indolent clergy, large bodies of them were transported from Armenia into Thrace ; from whence they passed on into Bulgaria, Sclavonia, Italy and France, where they united with the Vallenses, Albigenses and Waldenses, and were again cruelly persecuted by the Roman pontiffs. Those

who remained behind in Armenia, and Syria, were often driven to the most desperate measures, to prevent the total destruction of their families; and their zealous and faithful teachers, being every where particularly sought after, were *ready to expire* under the severity of their persecutors. These are the *forsaken*—the *removed*, whom the Lord directs the angel at Sardis to support, to sustain, to prop, as a tottering edifice, because they had almost been brought to the point of entire extinction.

*I have not found thy works perfect before God.* πεπληρωμένα, from πληρόω, signifies fulfilled, satisfied, completed, fully administered, Col. iv. 17. πληρόω, omnes officii partes obeo. Vide Pasor. It often refers to what a person has promised to perform, or what has become his duty to do: Scil. τον νομον, the law, or the duties of an office. These words οὐ γὰρ εὗρηκα σου τὰ ἔργα πεπληρωμένα should therefore be rendered thus: *I have not found thy offices fully administered before God.* The Lord grants that he has made a good beginning, but not continued with the same zeal and faithfulness; he charges him with having performed part of his duty, but not the whole. He probably hereby refers, both to the whole of his administration, as the ministry of the Church, and to his guilty negligence in failing to succour and support the poor Paulicians in their deep distress. Thus he stood charged on the book of judgment before God, against the great day of final retribution.

Verse 3. *Remember how thou hast received and heard.* Here the Lord seems to remind his servants of their *ordination*, when they were invested with the standing power, of being his ministry of reconciliation in his Church. Bear it always in your mind, says he, whose servants you are, that the word of reconciliation is entrusted to you, the government of the Church and body of Jesus Christ, the oracles of God, 1 Thess. iv. 1. 2 Tim. i. 13. and the sealing ordinances of the sacraments. Remember πως, how you,

and your predecessors received them pure, and uncorrupted, out of the hands of the apostles, as you have heard by the doctrine of others; hold fast, and administer them after their example, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, and purity, 1 Tim. iv. 12. Repent, and change your mind where you have deviated from the form of sound words, that you may walk in order to please God in Christ Jesus.

*If thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief.* Watchfulness consists in a careful attention to whatever passes in the world without, or in our own hearts within us, in order to derive advantage from it. But when the Lord requires this duty of his ministry, it has particular reference to the enemies and obstacles of their labours, and the prosperity of Zion. This is the case here; and the Lord threatens on non-observance of this duty, that he will come on him *as a thief*. This has been a usual expression among the Eastern nations to denote an unexpected calamity or judgment. The object of a thief is not strictly to murder, but to rob us of our property, when we sleep in security. This judgment the Lord has executed on the Eastern churches, by the amazing victories of Genghizkan, Tamerlane, and the Turks. The last of these entirely annihilated the Grecian empire, robbed the Christians of their wealth, treated them like slaves, loaded them with insupportable taxes, and obliged them to submit to many vexatious and oppressive laws: while those furious adventurers almost extinguished the religion of Jesus in the East. This dire judgment happened between the twelfth and fifteenth centuries, and the power of the Turks has continued to the present day.

Verse 4. *Thou hast a few names even in Sardis.* By ὀλίγα ὀνόματα, a few names or persons, we may understand, single ministers of the gospel among the many different sects in the Greek Church, who remained in union with that ministerial succession; and also those an-



cient witnesses of the truth, whom the Greeks called *Mas-salians*, i. e. persons that pray. Many of these were persons of eminent piety, and zeal for genuine Christianity, and neither enthusiasts nor heretics. They bore a loud testimony against the vices of the priesthood, and were therefore treated by them, either with derision or scorn. We are not sufficiently acquainted with the history of the Eastern church, to enter into many particulars on this subject; but even their enemies at times acknowledged the sincerity of their piety and eminent virtue. The Lord expresses the worth of their heart by saying: They have not defiled the garments of their souls, by self-righteousness, or the pollutions of the world; they shall walk *with me* in white, for they are worthy. This is a special promise, made to them only. They shall walk with him.

Verse 5. *He that overcometh shall be clothed in white raiment.* The promise is always general, and refers to the whole Church and its faithful members, as well as to the ministry; on condition that they overcome and persevere in the great conflict unto death. The white colour denotes holiness and victory, and a white vestment, great distinction and privileges in the world to come.

*I will not blot out his name out of the book of life.* It was customary with the monarchs of the East, to have the names and deeds of such persons recorded in a book, who had done great and eminent service to their persons, or empire. Est. vi. 1. To such a record in heaven, the Lord seems to allude in this place. Persons of such distinguished services were entitled to particular reward or privileges, such as office, titles and dignity; or perhaps the Lord may here refer to the registers of genealogy, that were kept among the people of God in the land of promise, by which on their return from Babylon, they proved their titles to their patrimony, and the priests to the priesthood. Ezra ii. 62. Those whose names were not found in these registers, had forfeited their inheritance. Under this last

allusion, the import of these words would be, that the Lord should then consider and reward them as his elect.

The Lord will confess their names before his Father and before his angels. Heavenly honour! immense reward! When they were yet in this pilgrimage, the world separated and reproached them, and cast out their names as evil; but then the Lord will mention them to his Father, as his, and as worthy of preferment and dignity. Those around them on earth, often insulted and mortified them while here—but then, the angels will honour and exalt them through all eternity.

A PASTORAL CHARGE  
TO THE ANGEL AT PHILADELPHIA.

Verse 7. And to the angel of the Church in Philadelphia write; these things saith He that is Holy, He that is true, He that hath the key of David, He that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth;

8. I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it; for thou hast a little strength, and has kept my word, and hast not denied my name.
9. Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee.
10. Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.
11. Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.
12. Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out; and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is New Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God; and I will write upon him my new name.
13. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches.

This charge is given to the new succession of the gospel ministry in the Protestant Church; which is called Philadelphia, because of the brotherly love that subsists between the different communities belonging thereto, and their unanimous testimony against Popery and its corruptions, both in doctrine and worship. It is worthy of remark, that the different names of these seven Churches, when considered according to the meaning of the primitive words, of which they are composed, are all expressive of the internal state of these Churches at their distinct periods of time.

1. *Ephesus*, signifies *ardent desire* or *desirable*, and expresses that ardent wish and zeal of the Church during the apostolic period, to extend and propagate the Christian religion, and her amiable and lovely character in the sight of heaven.
2. *Smyrna*, denotes *myrrh* or *bitterness*, and in prophetic language is an emblem of persecution and sufferings, to which period it also refers.
3. *Pergamos*, an *exalted tower*, or *steeple*. This was the name of that well fortified castle at Troja, from whence this signification originated; which here indicates that firm and invincible stand, which the Church had taken from the time of Constantine the Great.
4. *Thyatira*, from *θύω*, I sacrifice, and *τεῖλω*, I corrupt, a *corrupted sacrifice*, and expresses that corrupt worship of God introduced by Jezebel, which was not a sweet savour, but the offensive smell of a mortified offering before the Lord.
5. *Sardiſ*, from the Hebrew word *Sarad*, to remain, signifies the *remainder*, the *residue*. After the schism, the Greeks were under the proud impression of being the only Church of Christ left, after the great conflict with Paganism and the establishment of Popery among the Latins; but after the Mahome-



dan inundation on the Eastern part of the Roman empire, their Church became a remnant indeed.

6. *Philadelphia*, signifies *brotherly love*.
7. *Laodicea*, signifies *judicature of the people*, or *the rights of the people*; because in that Church the highest authority is lodged in its members, who rule the Church as a political polity, according to reason and conveniency of circumstances. Here all Ecclesiastical discipline and Church censure is lost.

Verse 7. *He that is holy—is true*. The holy one of Israel, Jer. xlv. 11; the true antitype of the Jewish high priest, who was considered the most holy person in Israel, Exod. xxviii. 36. Among all the sons of men he is holy without sin, and perfect in his own person. He is the real antitype, in whom all types and figures of the old covenant were actually fulfilled; true in all his promises to his Churches—in all his threatenings to his enemies—The only infallible guide through the dark valley of this world.

*He that hath the key of David*. By this expression the Lord refers us to that memorable prophecy, Jer. xxii. in which the prophet foretells the final doom of the kingdom of Israel by the Assyrians. According to the use the Lord makes of that prediction in this place, Jerusalem and the land of Juda denote the Christian countries in Europe, and Sebna, the proud and haughty treasurer over the king's house, signifies the Pope at this present time; who abuses the keys of the kingdom of heaven in the vilest manner, as Sebna did his authority in Juda; He shall be violently turned and tossed like a ball, driven from his station, verse 18, 19; and the Lord himself will be the true Eliakim, who will make a better use of these keys to the castle and royal treasury of David, than he has done—And what he does will be final.

Every year on a certain day, the Pope assumes the pretended authority of his chair, and pronounces a host of most horrible curses and anathemas against the Protes-

tants, giving them over to the devil for eternal damnation, because they will not acknowledge the pretensions of his holiness. The poor man seems to be ignorant, that the Lord has seven Churches in one; though no doubt, there are also seven principal parts in his own body, from which he might learn wisdom. Weak children of God might be terrified by this unchristian and audacious conduct of the Roman bishop; the Lord therefore comforts them, that he has the key to the heavenly treasury, and that the tyrannical anathemas of the haughty Popes are of no effect.

Verse 8. *I have set before thee an open door.* δίδωμι ἐνώπιόν, might be rendered, *I have established publicly before you an opened door.* See Eph. i. 22. and Luke xii. 9. where δίδωμι signifies to *constitute, establish*, and ἐνώπιόν, *publicly before an assembly, council, or diet.* Here the Lord refers to that great work of reformation, which was begun in Germany by those eminent men of God, Luther, Zwingel and Calvin, in the year 1517. Luther stood singly before that grand assembly at Worms, A. D. 1521; and with great resolution and presence of mind contended for the Word of God, as the only rule of faith. At the diet of Augsburg, A. D. 1530, those ministers and churches, which had embraced the evangelic doctrine of Luther, made that famous confession of faith, by which the Lutheran community stands distinguished from other Protestant societies of later date. A. D. 1548, the *Interim* was agreed to, and 1555, on the 25th of September, the Protestants obtained legal authority for the free exercise of their religion in Germany, which they have enjoyed to the present day. Thus the Lord has publicly established an open door, for the progress of the Evangelic doctrine, and for an extensive propagation of the gospel of Jesus among many nations. And the Protestants did not want for zeal, to enter this open door. The light of the reformation soon spread all over Germany, Switzerland, Sweden, Denmark, Britain, and into some parts of France, Bohemia, Poland,

and the Netherlands; where thousands of congregations have since been established in unison with the different Protestant societies, which form the Church of Philadelphia.

*Thou hast a little strength.* The Protestants are but a small number, in comparison with the many Roman Catholic countries and kingdoms; but yet they have a power and they will retain it till the Lord comes.

*Thou hast kept my word.* This was the great theme of the Protestant Reformers against Popery and its corruptions. No traditions, no pretended infallibility of the Pope, or the fathers; the word of Jesus was their only authority and rule of faith, of worship and practice. The Reformation of the Church rests on this foundation, this is her distinguishing character from Popery. The original is not *κρατεῖν*, to keep, to hold, but *τηνεῖν*, to guard, to preserve, and refers to the Protestant endeavours to defend the authority and dignity of the Word of God, against traditions and the inventions of men.

*Hast not denied my name.* The name of Christ signifies in this place, his *person* and *religion*. Never, before these last fifty years, was the Protestant Church in danger of denying the Lord Jesus, or his religion. The Romish Church, although corrupted, is still a Christian Church, in which souls may be trained up to eternal felicity. The Protestants had nothing to fear from Popery in that respect. But since Voltaire, Rousseau, and with them a host of French infidels began to write against religion—since the Kantian philosophy has become the fashion of to day—since even eminent divines have begun to trace out a new system of what they call the higher exegesis, for the explanation of the Scriptures; since then a flood of infidelity has overflowed all Europe. Even Germany, which by the blessed reformation had become the fountain of light and truth to other countries, and was since that time so eminently adorned with great and good men for near

three centuries, has lost much of her glory by those numerous Illuminati and other infidel societies established among all ranks of her inhabitants. These vain pretenders to philosophy have not yet discovered their delusion—many of her respectable divines have still neither taste nor relish for divine truths—and the higher ranks consider it a condescension to read any thing serious, unless it comes recommended by all the charms of wit and elegance. However, there still are many thousand respectable and faithful divines in the Protestant Church, and in all her distinct fraternities, of which she consists; and among the middle classes of society, this temptation to infidelity will never produce any great effect. Whatever our anticipation may be from present appearances of apostacy in Europe or America; the Lord may thoroughly purge his floor; but the Protestant Church will remain firm and faithful in the confession of Jesus Christ, and his doctrines, till he comes.

Verse 9. *I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, come and worship before thy feet.* These words are not yet fulfilled. If they are to be understood in their natural meaning, as in the charge to the angel at Smyrna, properly of Jews; then the Protestant Church during the future persecution by the adherents of Popery, will have to expect a renewed scene of Jewish animosities, as of old; and at last a harvest with some of them. This sense is very probable. But if we are to take these words as being of figurative import, they may imply that some of the great champions of infidelity will lay down their weapons of unrighteousness against the Church, and make public confession of their false accusations and guilt. It has often been the case during the first century after the Reformation, that those who falsely called themselves members of the Church of Christ, and were only the sycophants of the Romish Jezebel, after many fallacious and perfidious accusations, made public acknowledgment of their guilty con-



duct towards the Protestants, and became converts to their faith. And we may now expect the same thing of the champions of modern philosophy. Truth may be suppressed for a time, but her own internal lustre will always again discover her genuine beauty ; and her enemies must at last feel the necessity of her company, and own her excellence.

Verse 10. *Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation.* ὑπομονή ought to be rendered, *expectancy*, or *patient expectation*, in a passive sense here, [See 2 Thess. iii. 5. 1 Thess. i. 3.] so as to refer to the advent of Christ, of which the Lord also speaks in the following verse. The meaning is: Because thou hast constantly professed the doctrine [τόν λόγον] concerning my coming again among you, to unite all my Churches, and to establish my kingdom of everlasting dominion, in which all powers on earth shall serve and obey me, Dan. vii. Some expositors however have taken the original as rendered by our common version, and understood the doctrine of his sufferings for the sins of the world, in which he has taught us, how to exercise patience in taking up our cross to follow him, Math. xvi. 24. To both these points of doctrine the Protestant Church has borne a constant testimony, though more explicitly and unanimously to the last—and we here see, her conduct in that respect meets the entire approbation of the Lord ; for both these doctrines greatly tend to the glory of Christ, and the prosperity of his kingdom. Patience and constancy until the mystery of God be finished, is now more necessary to the followers of Christ, than ever.

In consideration of this proof of faithfulness, the Lord promises them a great reward. I will also keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world. When are we to expect this great temptation, and in what will it consist ? In my opinion this momentous trial

has already commenced, and will consist in the following particulars.

I. That general propensity and natural aptness in the present disposition of the Christian world towards infidelity, and the illustration of natural truths, without all reference to God or his word. This indeed is the spirit of our times, in which unbelief in Christ has increased to an alarming degree, and like the dragon in the Revelation, has drawn the third part of the stars of heaven, and cast them to the earth. The effects already produced are portentous. The public apostacy of a great and polished nation, glorying in the abominations of her own hands; the public avowal of Deism and even Atheism, by many in every Christian country, who dare to treat Christianity as a mere kind of fanaticism in open conversation, without a blush or check of conscience; the multiplicity of books, written in open or concealed defiance of the religion of Christ, and in language and style, adapted to all classes and ranks of society; these are the dire effects of the above mentioned propensity, and the sad prognostics of an hour of temptation, never yet experienced by the Church of Christ.

II. The present torrent of revolutionary politics, pervading all ranks of civil society, has greatly deranged the affairs of the political world; as infidelity, its fountain head, is certainly the first cause of all moral degeneracy and confusion. It has brought about a general neglect of family worship, and of vital religion, by which a due sense of our obligations towards God and the civil authority, is chiefly nourished; and introduced such an indifference to all religion, as even to sap the foundation of civil society, and make man attempt his rights and liberties in a state of nature. This is the true fountain of that greedy and insatiable desire after liberty and the rights of man, which even now divides America, scourges Europe, and is about to produce a fermentation in Asia and Africa, as far as civilization extends. This is the true spirit of tempta-

tion to civil discontent, luxury, pride, envy and avarice—it is Satan transformed into an angel of light.

III. A new revival of Popery by the power of the second beast from the earth, Rev. xiii. 11—17. which will instigate a most sanguinary persecution against the Protestants, and against all those who refuse to worship the first beast, or his image. The chief points of this prophecy are not yet fulfilled, but their accomplishment is near at hand. Our eyes may behold those abominations, and our hearts will bleed for our brethren in Europe. Many will fall a sacrifice to Papal vengeance; and more will prove unfaithful to their Lord, and worship the beast.

IV. This hour of temptation will be completed by the ascension of the beast from the bottomless pit, and that train of unparalleled calamities and tyranny, which then ensues. Though the element already exists, in which this beast shall live, move, and have its being; the beast itself has not yet assumed the reins of government, and probably will not come into full view yet for a time.

*Upon all the world.* ἐπὶ τῆς οἰκουμένης sometimes signifies only the Roman empire. See Luke ii. 1. Acts xi. 28. But it appears to me, this temptation will be of far greater extent, because its circumference is immediately after repeated by the expression, “upon the earth.”

*To try them that dwell upon the earth.* This manner of expression generally denotes worldly minded and carnal men, who live as if this world was their only home. This temptation therefore will not only concern the children of God, it will befall the children of the world also, whether they be Jews, Turks, Pagans or Christians.

*also will keep thee.* During this intense and general trial of the civilized world, the Lord promises to preserve his gospel ministry in the Protestant Church. He as the true Eliakim, hath taken the key to the strong hold of David (2 Sam. v. 7.) on Mount Zion, from the Roman Sebna, Jer. xxii. 19—22. where he will afford them pro-

tection against the Assyrians, when that scene of misery and danger commences. Wherever this strong hold may be, in the East or West, the whole figure indicates a flight to a place of safety and union, not so very distant, and within the limits of the former encampment of the Church.

Verse 11. *Behold I come quickly.* This then is the last conflict which we shall have to sustain. Its length is called an hour, i. e. a determinate space of time in the councils of heaven. It may be short in comparison with the times of the three woes in the Revelation; but it will appear very long to all the children of God. During this dark hour, we shall often walk sad and troubled, like his disciples to Emmaus, and ask one another: will our long expected king not soon make his appearance again among his oppressed and persecuted followers? It is impossible that he should leave or forsake us, and yet he has now been silent for eighteen centuries—and that is long. Might he not give us at least one visible token, to comfort our hearts and cheer our souls in this burning desert? Our eager eyes have often looked for the appearance of the morning star, and the prognostics of the great day of his Church; but we have hitherto discovered little of his approach. To this lamentation the Lord here answers: be comforted my children, the hour is now arrived, behold, I come quickly for your complete and glorious deliverance. *Hold that fast which thou hast*, in these times of apostacy and political confusion. I cannot expect you to make great progress in your journey among rocks and cliffs, in this dark and dreary night; only take heed that you may not forfeit your crown of victory, which I have already allotted as your reward.

Verse 12. *Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God.* Great is the promised reward—but the conflict has been tremendous too, which the faithful combatant had to sustain, and for which it is offered. The conquerors in Philadelphia shall be a pillar in the temple



of God. This temple is not in New Jerusalem, but previous to it; for the name of the city of God shall be written upon this pillar, as a token of their citizenship there, when it shall come down from heaven. This temple denotes the Church of Jesus Christ during the Millennium, in which the faithful Protestant ministry shall be one of the pillars, to support the *inside* work of the House of God, i. e. they shall superintend the priesthood and the whole government of the Church during that glorious period. In what all this noble administration will then consist, time will exhibit. The Lord mentions a second, and remarkable use of this pillar: he will write upon it three different names, the name of God, the name of New Jerusalem, and the name of Christ. It was an ancient custom to decorate the pillars of temples and Churches with coats of arms, and trophies of signal victories; or even to inscribe the names and celebrated deeds of great and good men on their most conspicuous parts, for the information of attending spectators. In allusion to this custom, the Lord promises the faithful Philadelphians, that he will make them a standing ministry in his future Church, to declare the great deeds and ways of God with the nations on earth; the conflicts and triumphs of Christ in his Church; the civil and ecclesiastic constitutions of New Jerusalem; in order to acquaint them with their duties in that Theocracy, or royal priesthood, which will be established on earth during the Millennium. He that hath an ear, let him hear.

## A PASTORAL CHARGE

### TO THE ANGEL AT LAODICEA.

- Verse 14. And unto the angel of the Church of the Laodiceans write; these things saith the Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the beginning of the creation of God.
15. I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot.
16. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.
17. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind and naked.
18. I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich, and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see.
19. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten; be zealous, therefore, and repent.
20. Behold, I stand at the door and knock: If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come into him, and will sup with him, and he with me.
21. To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my father in his throne.
22. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches.

There is a remarkable difference in the title of this angel, by which he is in a singular manner distinguished from those in the foregoing charges. They are all addressed thus: The angel at Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, &c. but here: *The angel of the Church of the Laodiceans*; by which the Lord seems to indicate, that this succession of the gospel ministry are less his servants, than in any of the former Churches, and more immediately the dependent servants of the people—which perhaps is a chief cause of their deplorable spiritual condition. The different manner of expression, however, refers more immediately to the Church, over which this angel presides. She is called *the Church of the Laodiceans*, where in the former charges only the places are mentioned, in which those Churches are, and Jesus Christ, as the owner of them, understood; as if the Lord attributed her existence as a separate Church, more to the hands of men, than to his own wise and all disposing Providence—for which reason he could not fully own her as his Church. This idea also receives considerable support from the signification of her name, *Laodicea*, which word being composed of  $\lambda\alpha\delta\epsilon\varsigma$  and  $\delta\acute{\iota}\kappa\eta$ , signifies the *right, jurisdiction and judgment of the people*, and thus expresses the internal state of this Church, in which the Church government is lodged in the hands of the members, who judge and are judged.

It no less imports us to ask, why only the members of *this* Church are not mentioned in one body, as those in the other charges. All the former are entitled: the Church at Ephesus, Smyrna, &c. &c. but this in the *plural number* thus: the Church of the *Laodiceans*. I have seen Griesback's variation here:  $\epsilon\nu\ \lambda\alpha\omicron\delta\iota\kappa\epsilon\acute{\iota}\alpha\ \epsilon\kappa\kappa\lambda\eta\sigma\iota\alpha\varsigma$ , but it appears to me not sufficiently supported; neither does it so well accord with the spirit and internal state of this Church, as the reading in the common Greek text. We dare not suspect a play of words, or an inadvertent lapse of the pen, when the Lord speaks—there certainly is a rea-

son for this change. In my opinion this manner of expression indicates, that this Church *consists of many small bodies* of Christians, which have separated from the other Churches, where each body governs itself independently of the rest, though according to the *same mind and principles*, by which alone they stand united. However, the Lord still regards her teachers as his ministry, and the united number of their societies or congregations, as his Church. Their creed, therefore, must yet be orthodox, at least as to essential points of doctrine; for by Atheism, or Deism in their confession, they would totally forfeit the name of being a Church of Christ. Though there appears to be but a slight connexion at first between the different bodies, of which this Church consists, when the whole of what has been said, is taken into consideration; yet time and circumstances will induce at least the ministry, to draw the cords of union more to a point.

Verse 14. *The Amen.* This is a Hebrew word, and Eloheei Amen, signifies the God of truth. Jer. lxxv. 16. It also has the sanction of an oath, Deut. xxvii. and then its import is, that all the words to which it refers, shall most assuredly be fulfilled. In this last signification, our blessed Lord often uses it in the Evangelists, where we read in English: “*Verily, verily, I say unto you,*” as a solemn oath of assurance, annexed to those truths, which solely rest on his authority. By declaring himself the *Amen* then, we are solemnly assured, that he himself will fulfil all the promises of God to man.

*The faithful and true witness.* He is called the *faithful* witness, because he has testified the whole truth of God to man; and *true*, because he declared nothing but the truth in the name of his Father on earth, and sealed it with his blood. Jer. lv. 4. He was a witness indeed, who brought the truth with him from heaven, the *Logos* of God, none knew it as well as he, for he is the truth himself to all eternity. Reader attend to his testimony, it is worthy of all regard.



*The beginning of the creation of God.* Not *principium passivum*, as if He himself was the first of all created beings, but *principium activum*, from whom all created beings received existence. Col. i. 16. Psalms cii. 26. 27. Heb. ii. 2. Ἀρχή, the beginning, signifies the *first fountain, author or origin*, and is a word of great import among the ancient Orientals. The beginning of creation denotes the first opening and entrance of the ground-plot to all existence; and in progressive life, to higher degrees. *All things were made by Him; and without Him was not any thing made that was made.* John i. 3. The Zend Avesta of Zoroaster, according to Mr. *Anquetil du Perron's* translation, T. iii. p. 800. 670. 697. conceives the most inward principle of all creation to be life, and cosmogony, a refining or clarifying of light into life. The life of the earth, sun, trees, animals and men, are only so many different degrees of clarified light into life, which in its highest degree of refinement is the image of God in the souls of holy, charitable and good men. God dwelled from eternity in his fullness of uncreated light, and revealed himself by the *Logos* in the creation of the Universe, who there was the fountain-head of the life and light of angels and men. These are the noble ideas of the ancient Persians, whom we call Heathens. What a difference between their exalted conceptions of the *Logos* of God, and those low and degrading assertions of self-idolizing infidels in our days? They shall rise in judgment, and condemn them with all their deluded followers.

Verse 15. *I know thy works.* I have inspected thy offices, and the nature and spirit of their administration. My judgment differs widely from your boasting congratulations, by which you console yourselves to your own destruction. You are utterly mistaken in the general character of your administration.

*Thou art not cold.* Thou art not entirely ignorant of the things of the spirit of God, not totally a stranger to matters of a divine nature; not a Jew, Heathen or Infidel.

*Nor hot.* As boiling water is penetrated by the particles of heat, thus should our souls be occupied by the power of Godliness in faith, love and charity, through the operations of the Holy Ghost.

*I would thou wert cold or hot.* Thou couldst sooner be recovered, and my sentence on thee would be less terrible. Luke xii. 47. 2 Pet. ii. 21.

Verse 16. *Thou art lukewarm.* Not an Infidel, an Antichrist, nor a Christian. By this expression the Lord refers to the whole administration of all his offices. Lukewarmness in the ministry of a Church may be comprehended under the three following heads :

I. When they fall into such gross errors and misconceptions, as to neglect preaching the *peculiar doctrines* of the Christian religion. These essential points are the doctrine of the Holy Trinity of persons in the undivided Godhead ; the incarnation of the Son of God ; the expiation of the sin of the world by the Redeemer's sufferings and death ; the efficacy of his intercession ; the necessary co-operation of the Holy Ghost, in order to become experimentally acquainted with the Spirit and vital influence of religion, spreading itself over all the powers of men's souls, and quickening them into a *divine life* ; together with the intimate union, between God and the believer's soul. When the ministry of a Christian society ceases to be evangelical—when their sermons are thus divested of the genuine spirit and savour of Christianity, which alone produces vital heat, nourishes the soul, and quickens the spirit ; then such a ministry is lukewarm—it is like a dying man, in whom the incapacitated principle of life has given way, to the cold hand of chilling death.

II. When their sermons are reduced to mere moral essays without scriptural motives, or instruction from whence the hearer is to obtain the power, and necessary disposition of heart, to perform those duties and virtuous actions, which are impressed on his conscience. Our pro-

per office is to preach the word of reconciliation to a world of offending and ungrateful sinners; to propound the terms of peace and pardon to the penitent; to open the fountain of light and life on their souls; administer medicine to the sick; and wholesome refreshment for the thirsty and panting soul. When therefore a ministry make the *practice* of religion their sole subject of public discourse, and even turn apes of *Epictetus*, or the *Stoics*, under a Christian garb, as if the illiterate, or common people wanted capacity to comprehend the great mystery of Godliness; such abody of nominal divines is lukewarm, and might with the same justice bear any other name, as well as that of a Christian ministry.

III. When their manner of life and conversation is void of that sweet, mild, humble and loving spirit of Jesus, which like the morning sun, spreads a heavenly lustre upon all the actions of good men, and animates them at all times to cultivate those two grand principles of Christianity—piety to God, and charity to man. A ministry of Jesus, without vital and experimental religion, is a curse to the land. Zech. xi. 16. He that is not with me is against me, and cannot gather, but scatters and destroys. Luke xi. 23. They follow their office as a profession, come abroad one day in seven, dressed in solemn looks; and all the rest of the week their social intercourse and personal conduct is in open contradiction to the spirit of the gospel. They are of the world, and court favour with the world, that they may enjoy her pleasures; they confide in human learning and knowledge, more than in the illumination from above.

*I will spue thee out.* As a nauseating morsel, which excites disgust and vomition. Wo to that soul against which the Lord has such a great aversion! its final doom must be dreadful! This expression denotes, that the Lord will disown this succession of his ministry when he comes, and

reject them with contempt and indignation. This is the signification of—ἐμὲς αἱ—in the original.

Verse 17. *Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing.* λέγω here should be rendered to *teach*, to *preach*, Math. xxiii. 9. to declare publicly, 2 Cor. ix. 3. Heb. ix. 11. Math. iv. 14. Rev. iii. 9. Math. xiii. 14. These three sentences contain those peculiar points of doctrine, which the ministry of the Laodiceans inculcate, and by which they stand distinguished from the Philadelphians, as a separate Church. *I am rich*: Man is not in a depraved and fallen condition by nature—there is no such a thing as original sin. The image of God has never been defaced in the human soul—he is suited to his state and place, as perfect as he ought to be in the gradation of the whole chain of rational beings. All the vices and corruptions in the world derive their origin from education and the necessary circumstances of our existence here. Our modern metaphysicians have now explored the ocean of the human soul, and probed all its faculties to the bottom. Reason is a pure and unsullied light; the will of man is not alienated from the life of God; our affections are not estranged by nature; and conscience is the mere child of education. This is the comment on the above sentence: *I am rich*; which seems to refer solely to their general course or drift of doctrine concerning the natural capacities and dignity of man.

*I am increased with goods.* Man is fully sufficient to make himself virtuous—it only requires a firm and steady resolution of being so; and of this resolution he himself is master, at his own pleasure. As all our disorders are not the effects of sin, but consequences of our limited nature; all evil inclinations may be overcome by reason, without the *grace and assistance of God*. Our happiness is in our own power, and we may change our habits and disposition, by a mere philosophic use of the natural and Christian means in hand. What great progress have we



not made in arts and sciences, in civilization and politeness! To what a great degree of illumination has the human mind arrived since the days of the Reformation! Superstition is turned out of doors—the wings of fanaticism and enthusiasm will now soon be sufficiently clipped. We soon will have a rational body of exegetic rules, for a more reasonable explanation of the Bible, and are already furnished with means sufficient to determine the flowers of Hebrew poetry, and the bold flights and fire of oriental genius. Blessed be God! we now say little more of Creeds, or Confessions of Faith; our province is the practice and moral part of religion. *Whether the people believe one God or twenty Gods, that will neither pick my pocket, nor break my leg.* These are just inferences and a true explanation of the words: I am increased with goods, and have need of nothing; by which the Lord refers to their boasting of acquired abilities in science, religion and virtue.

*And knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.* You are most egregiously deceived—full of self-conceit and vain presumption, says the Lord; your real condition is quite the reverse, of what you conceive yourself to be, or to possess. Your boasted metaphysics, and essays on human understanding are like a transmigrating soul among the ancients, which in every generation assumed a new body, and in essence always remained the same. Your endeavours to model the principles of exegetical theology after this meteor of so transitory a nature, can only serve to confuse and perplex divinity, in order that others may again disentangle and simplify it from your heterogeneous wisdom, which is foolishness before God. You boast of superior illumination in Divine things by the help of reason and philosophy, like a blind man of sight. The empire of reason can never be extended beyond the limits of the material world; and that inward illumination from above, by which alone spirit-

ual things can be discerned, is not your present portion.  
1 Cor. ii. 14.

All your fine moral discourses upon virtues and vices, without scripture motives, and the whole system of redemption, will never win one soul to Christ and his heavenly kingdom. You act the part of a foolish physician at the side of a sickbed, who would, without administering wholesome and effective medicines, prescribe exercise to a dying man, professional employment to the sick, and diet where all appetite is lost. Would not an intelligent patient in that case answer: Doctor, this is reversing your proper order of proceeding; first cure my disease, and your prescriptions shall be implicitly obeyed. Such a preacher of mere morals, separates what God has united, and complies only with half his commission to the world—he builds the fabric of a mill, but neglects to bring the water to run upon the wheel, which is to put the whole machine in motion. Practical holiness is the great end of religion, and faith is the means—it would be folly to expect this end, without the use of means in a proper manner. Not mere morality, but vital religion is the chief good of man, and this also is the principal aim of an Evangelical preacher in all his sermons. These only are the sermons, which the Lord has ever blessed to rescue immortal souls from perdition into the arms of Jesus, and to nourish them unto eternal life. For man is radically corrupted, and his restoration must begin from the heart. A minister, therefore, without vital, personal religion—sermons, thus void of the genuine spirit and savour of Christianity—the private and public conversation of such a moralist, in the garb of a pastor of Christ's flock, without the unction from above, are indeed wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.

Verse 18. *I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire.* Here the Great Counsellor from heaven advises the manner, how this angel may recover himself from his de-

plorable condition. He was defective in three material points, being *poor*, *blind* and *naked*; and in this wretched and miserable state, cold, insensible, and full of self-conceit, as if he wanted nothing. In order to his recovery from these three distempers, the Lord recommends the following means: 1. Pure and most refined carat gold, against his poverty—2. White raiment, against his spiritual nakedness—3. Eyesalve, to cure the philosophical cataract of his eyes. As his poverty consisted in a total deficiency of divine knowledge, and his imaginary riches, in a presumption that he knew all things that pertain to his station in the Church; this *pure and most refined gold* must denote the *illumination* and *unction* from above, by which the Holy Spirit of God teaches his friends *knowledge* and *wisdom* unto salvation. Without this illumination we rely entirely on our own reason, and often explain away the doctrine of grace—we only understand the Word of God by nature, and not by grace; by human learning, but not by the secret inspirations of the Holy Ghost; by reason, but not by love; the outward letter, but not the secret of the Spirit, or that which is spiritually discerned, and which alone nourishes the vital principle of eternal life in the soul of man.

*White raiment*, is the righteousness of saints, Rev. xix. 8; even the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ, Jer. xi. 10. which we obtain by faith. For the Laodicean morality is self-righteousness, and the filthy rags of a beggar; in which we shall for ever be indigent, ashamed, and in everlasting contempt before the citizens of the kingdom of God. These we are to buy, i. e. to receive, Jer. lv. 1. for where-with will a poor man buy gold, and costly raiment to cover his nakedness? But it will cost all our imaginary riches.

*And eyesalve*. This denotes a true and impartial self-examination, by which we look inwardly, and take an interesting view of the present state of our heart, respecting God and our fellow creatures. Of this eyesalve the min-

istry of the Laodiceans stand very much in need. They are totally ignorant of the real state of their mind and heart, and what is still worse, full of self-flattery and deceit. Unconvinced of their ignorance in the things of the Spirit, of the weakness and unworthiness of their corrupted heart, they never seriously inquired into the health of their soul, with any solicitude for grace and illumination from above, in order to restore them to Divine life, and to religious sensibility. Thus they administer the holy offices as a profession, without devotion and zeal for the temple of Jesus—without solicitude for the salvation of souls—without a good and Christian example in their conversation and behaviour—and without prayer. Gracious Lord! Can thy servants so far forget themselves, as to devote their ministry to the service of the enemy of mankind, and lead those very souls to perdition, whom they are appointed to save, and whom thou hast redeemed by thy precious blood!

Verse 19. *As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten.* By this expression the Lord mitigates the severity of the above censure, and enlivens their hope of recovery. You are not all sunk to the very brink of destruction; there are yet many among you, whom I love with tender compassion, and therefore take them into my school for a better education, (ἐλέγχω καὶ παιδεύω) that they may learn to know *sin and God*. This discipline consists in the vital operations of his Spirit on our hearts in affliction. A severe illness, a great loss, a disappointment, the death of a beloved parent, consort, child, or friend, have often reclaimed a prodigal son to submit to the vital influence of Divine grace, in order to his restoration. Into this school of discipline I will take you, saith the Lord—therefore beware of grieving or quenching my Spirit; but *be zealous, and repent*, before it be too late.

Verse 20. *Behold, I stand at the door and knock.* Here the Lord seems to speak of revivals of religion, and spe-



cial seasons of grace in the Church of the Laodiceans, which however are not brought about by the instrumentality of her ministry, but by different servants of Jesus Christ, with whom he is particularly present, and blesses their labours. By the zealous labours of these select servants, the Lord himself stands at the door of the Laodicean Church; and to the outward tender of grace in the gospel, annexes an inward offer of his Divine influence on the mind and heart of the hearers, sufficient for their conversion, if not resisted. Whosoever these special servants of the Lord may be, they seem to have a particular aim at the Laodicean ministry in all their labours, in order to rouse them from their state of lukewarmness and spiritual insensibility; by which no doubt, they will bring many reflections and perhaps persecution on themselves. However, they are the arm of the Lord, and the Gospel of Christ is the hammer, by which these harbingers of good tidings knock against the door of the Laodicean temple, so as to shake and resound through the whole edifice, in order to communicate the blessing entrusted to them. For the Laodiceans have drunk deeply of the narcotic potion, and are not easy to rouse from their lethargy, except by effective means. They may stigmatize these instruments as intruders, and disturbers of their peace; but if they open the door, and give ear to their message, the servants of the Lord may expect a cordial welcome.

*I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.* Those who try to improve this season of grace, (for it appears to be the last one, immediately before the great conflict of the Church, and the second advent of Christ,) are here promised a blessing of immense value, even to sup with the Lord. These words do not properly refer to the sacrament of the Lord's supper, but to that intimate union and familiarity, which believers enjoy with Christ in those halcyon times, and seasons of grace, when the Holy Ghost shall prepare the lamp of their souls for a day of solemn

rejoicing in the arms of Jesus. The blessed prognostics of such a season, are, as in single persons, so in a congregation, town, city or country, a remarkable attention to the preaching of the word, and to all the means of grace; a peculiar serenity in the minds of the people, to discern spiritual things; a notable fervency and punctuality in the performance of all religious duties; glowing sentiments of Christian piety and general benevolence, in which the mind endeavours to soar high above nature, to the gate of eternal felicity, which the lukewarm would call enthusiasm, and bless themselves for their moderation. Whosoever shall see these signs of the Son of Man, let him understand.

It was an ancient custom among the Orientals, to make friendly suppers, in order to enjoy and exhilarate each other, and as a token of particular regard to their friends. The Eastern sages would meet on such occasions from far and near, in order to communicate to each other their knowledge and discoveries in the physical and moral world, and in regard to religion. These were hours of exalted pleasure and enjoyment—favours of a superior kind; and by this emblem the Lord here represents his seasons of special grace and spiritual union with his Church, and the divine visitations to his pastors, in which he discovers himself in all the loveliness of his character, and illuminates the path of their ministry, when they begin to travel in weariness through the valley of this world.

*I will sup with him, and he with me.* The accomplishment of the 20th verse comprises a considerable time in the Church, and these words appear to have an immediate reference to that great and glorious marriage-supper of the Lamb, recorded in chapt. xix. 9. by which the Lord is about to gladden and overjoy his faithful followers at his second advent. We are now transported with joy unspeakable, and full of glory, when the Lord discovers himself to our souls, in all his loving kindness—we feel his

presence, the vital influence of his spirit, and rejoice in his praise and the salvation of the world, to the full satisfaction of our heart. But at that glorious feast of the Lamb, our souls will be all pure, all love, all peace, all joy, and reach the source of all excellence, which no language can describe. New fountains of knowledge, of spiritual pleasure and happiness will be opened unto us—a never yet experienced intimacy with Christ and his Church, which will render us as blessed as it is possible to become in this world. But these words indicate a double feast: The Lord sups with his friends, and enjoys their faith, love and vital hope; and the believers enjoy him, as their wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption. 1 Cor. i. 30. Rom. xiv. 17. Blessed are they which are called to this feast of the Lamb.

Verse 21. *To him that overcometh will I grant, to sit with me in my throne.* It is remarkable that the Laodicean conquerors are here promised a more glorious reward, than any of the faithful combatants in the former charges. Those at Thyatira are to have power over the nations, and will be employed abroad in the king's service; the Philadelphians are to superintend the priesthood and the government of the Church: those at Sardis are to be employed at court, the temple, and in new offices to be established in church and state; but the Laodiceans are to be ministers of the interior affairs of state, which still denotes a higher honour, more abilities and confidence, than any of the former promises. But they are also deserving of a superior reward, for their conflict was greater and more severe.

A throne denotes royal authority and government. This emblem refers to a custom of the ancients, who made their thrones wide and spacious, so that more than one person could sit on them. They shall sit with the King of kings, and Lord of lords, on one and the same throne, and participate in his government, as his ministers of interior af-

fairs in that kingdom, which he is about to establish on earth during the Millennium. Dan. vii. This is the highest honour, and next to being the bride of the Lamb.

The Laodicean conquerors have stood the day which tried men's souls. They entered the field of battle, where all the powers of darkness, which had fought by separate detachments in former centuries, pitched their general camp and place of rendezvous—where the remnants of Paganism in church and state, superstition, infidelity, the revolutionary spirit of anarchy, liberty and egotism, made a united and last attack on the Church of Jesus Christ, which is to decide her fate on earth forever. We may anticipate important effects from the most vigorous efforts of the enemy of mankind, in the execution of a plan, which has cost him centuries of consideration and artifice, and whereof the beast from the bottomless pit, the true Antichrist, is both the first result, and chief instrument.

*Even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.* Here the Lord evidently distinguishes between his throne and the throne of his Father, as two distinct and separate governments. He was exalted to the throne of his Father, in his human nature, in consequence of the conquest he made by his victorious sufferings for the redemption of the world. The throne of his Father denotes the government of the Universe, and his throne the government of Jesus Christ in this sublunary world—the theatre of his redeemed family, which the Father has given him as his own inheritance. As the Father has exalted the Redeemer of the world in his manhood to his throne, in order to accomplish the divine purposes of His eternal councils; so the Lord Jesus promises to exalt the faithful, victorious combatants in Laodicea, to the administration of his government in this lower world. Blessed communion! unspeakable honour!

He that hath an ear among the Laodiceans, let him hear what the Spirit of Jesus Christ saith in the Churches.



It will now be an easy matter, by the help of such strong features and distinguishing characteristics, which the Lord has placed before us, to decide that grand question, who these Laodiceans are. Let us take a retrospective view of this Church and place all the principal features, which the Lord has described as distinguishing characteristics, at once before our eyes. They are represented,

- I. By their very name as a people which hold the supreme power of their rights, jurisdiction, and judgment, in their own hands ; which may refer both to their mode of civil and church government.
- II. By being called the *Church of the Laodiceans* in the plural number, as consisting of many distinct parties who yet have a common tie by which they stand united as a Church.
- III. As a Church of Jesus Christ, and one of the seven candlesticks, by which her orthodoxy, at least as to essentials is acknowledged, though she has added many things of her own, for which reason she is also denominated the Church of the Laodiceans.
- IV. The gospel ministry of this Church is lukewarm in all its administration. They neglect the peculiar doctrines of the gospel, which are the *life, fire and savour* of Christianity, and preach ingenious, flowery discourses on morality, supported by philosophical arguments and motives, which only appear to advantage in such writings as those of Seneca, Cicero, or the Stoics.
- V. This ministry is unsound in certain points of doctrine concerning the depraved and fallen condition of man, and the absolute necessity of God's grace in his restoration and recovery unto divine favour and gospel obedience.
- VI. There are revivals of religion among them, of a new and distinguished kind, by which the Lord in a special and powerful manner knocks at the door of

their temple. Many are roused to a sense of their danger, and turn victorious combatants in the great conflict, then pending between the Lord Jesus and the powers of darkness, concerning the very existence and duration of the Church of Christ.

VII. Since the whole series of these seven Churches arises in succession, the following from the preceding one immediately before it, we shall therefore have to look for these Laodiceans among the Protestant communities, who are the precedent Church of Philadelphia. It cannot be the Romish church, for that is a hierarchy; it cannot be the Greek church, because Philadelphia did not proceed from her; it cannot be the whole Protestant church, for that exists prior to it, and is promised to remain till the Lord comes. Neither does it denote those infidel societies in Europe, who during this time of *falling away*, have made public confession of Deism and infidelity; for they are far beneath the character of a Church of Christ at all, and have forfeited their eternal inheritance. My tremulous mind feels itself unequal to the decision. The Protestant communities in England and America will determine the question, who these Laodiceans are—and who are their ministry; whether they refer to the Russian church, or to themselves.

These seven charges constitute the first part of the Revelation of Jesus Christ to his servants, in which they receive instruction, censure, and comfortable promises, concerning those times and circumstances in which these churches exist, and how they should conduct the administration of their offices, as becoming a Christian ministry. I cannot close these charges of Jesus Christ, the great Shepherd and Bishop of souls, to his gospel ministry, by any thing more suitable and impressive, than the following words from Massillon's charges to his clergy: "But the

Church is not, God be praised ! disgraced by many of so profligate a character ; yet it cannot be dissembled that there are some, who, by their lukewarmness in religion, or their attachment to the world, weaken the efficacy of their ministry. For not keeping alive in their breasts the spirit and the grace of their calling, by prayer, by meditation, by a life of sanctity and holiness, they have neither power nor inclination to speak of the things of God. They perform the duties of their sacred function without zeal, and without interest, and by consequence, without a blessing : they pronounce the most awful and affecting truths with an indifference and insensibility which deprive them of all their force ; the coldness of their heart freezes the words on their tongue ; and it is not possible that they can inspire their hearers with the ardor of religion, the divine fire of the love of God, when they do not feel a single spark of it in their own breasts. For we must apply our leisure to meditation, and engage our heart in piety, if we would expatiate on the holiness of the gospel, with glory to God, and edification to our hearers ; if we would inspire those who violate its precepts with a dread of God's displeasure, if we would persuade them to avert his wrath, and secure his favour. Hence it is, that where "*holiness to the Lord*" is not eminently conspicuous in the life and conversation of the ministers of the gospel, many people depart from the service of the Church, unconcerned for their sins, and indifferent about their salvation : hence the preaching of the gospel without success, the prayers of the Church without avail, all the ordinances of religion, and all the means of salvation unedifying and unserviceable to Christians."

THE  
SECOND SERIES  
OF  
PROPHECIES.





## CHAPTER IV.

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THE Apocalypse may be divided into two parts, each of which contains a Series of Prophecies comprising many centuries. The first part commences with a general preface to this Book, and a special Introduction to that glorious appearance of Jesus Christ contained in the first chapter. After which the Lord reveals the lineage of his Church on earth, and the succession of his gospel ministry, down to his second Advent at the beginning of the Millennium. This and the following chapter, contain a more immediate Introduction to a new order of Prophecies, upon a more general scale, which in part, runs on parallel to the former series, and constitutes the main body of the Revelation.

With the explanation of this chapter, expositors begin their digression from each other, according to their different favourite systems. Some treat this vision theosophically, and view these images as objects of the invisible world. Others remain in the field of history, and explain it symbolically, as concerning the Christian dispensation. The pious prelate Bengelius and professor Yung, consider it as the theatre, from whence the invisible powers interfere in the scenes on earth, and direct the great and eventful occurrences in church and state. It no doubt deserves the attentive inquiry of the scholar, and the most acute investigation of able divines, since it is a synopsis of so many partial discoveries, made to the prophets and men

of God in former ages, and contains an aggregate of objects, to which we meet with such numerous allusions both in the Old and New Testaments. Before I enter on the explanation of this chapter, I presume it necessary, to make a few general remarks for the benefit of common readers, to which I shall often refer in the body of this treatise, and which will at once decide my lot, as to the tenor of this exposition.

I. This vision is an emblematical representation, and not a direct and immediate view of heavenly objects, as they appear in the celestial regions. We all know, that the Church of Jesus Christ on earth is not a natural woman, adorned with the sun, moon, and stars—that the old Roman empire was not a dragon—that Popery is not a beast with seven heads, and ten horns. These are all symbols of a large and comprehensive import, customary in prophetic language. But there certainly is something in the accomplishment of these predictions, which really resembles, and truly corresponds with those images, by which they are identified. Thus in the vision before us, there surely is no book of paper or parchment in heaven—no material throne; Christ does not appear there in the form of a Lamb, as slain—nor the Holy Ghost in the shape of seven lamps of fire. But there is undoubtedly somewhere a true resemblance and correspondent reality of these lofty figures in the accomplishment of this vision, by which they are fully authorized, and properly realized to the conviction of the human mind.

II. It is not the object of this vision to represent celestial beings in their spiritual nature. The sole purport of these sublime symbols is, to paint characters, offices, actions, judgments and blessings, as they exist, or were to be brought about by Providence. The reason for this proposition is self-evident. Because such are the limits and extent of human understanding in our present state of existence, that we are utterly incapable of acquiring any

knowledge of the spiritual nature of immaterial beings, as they essentially are. In things supernatural and divine, our knowledge must at all times remain very imperfect and limited. For even all matter of revelation from God to man, can only be made to us, in form of human ideas, and according to our manner and capacities of forming conceptions; (*pro nostro concipiendi modo*,) otherwise no human mind would be able to receive, or understand it. God alone inhabits eternity, and possesses an infinite knowledge of all things at once; but we live in time, and think by detached ideas, and in succession of thought. It would even be absurd to suppose, that a being consisting of body and spirit, so closely united, should be susceptible of purely sensitive, or purely spiritual ideas; when it is evident that the faculties and operations of a pure spirit must be very different, from those of a spirit so essentially united with a body. Moreover, all our materials of thought are derived either from sensation or reflection; but things immaterial and supernatural are generically—*toto genere*—different—*ἕθεν ἐστὶ τῶν ὄντων*—from what we are able to form conceptions of in our present state. Our real knowledge of these things depends altogether on figurative expressions, taken from sensible objects in nature, and their resemblance to things in the intellectual world; and on analogy between the faculties, operations, and perfections of the human mind, which was formed after the image of God, and their correspondent reality and true resemblance to the nature of things in heaven. Hence all our knowledge of God and the nature of a future world, is only relative and analogous; and we have no perceptions of the things of God, as they are in themselves. 1 Cor. ii. 12. We only know in part, and prophecy in part. 1 Cor. xiii. 9; we walk by faith, and not by sight. 2 Cor. v. 7. We only see through a glass into an enigmatical word, which expresses spiritual things by terms of sensible objects, and not face to face. 1 Cor. xiii. 12. And when Paul was



caught up to a view of heaven and paradise, the words which he heard were unspeakable in human language, and unlawful for man to utter. 2 Cor. xii. 4.

III. Yet all our knowledge of God and a future world, which we have acquired in this way, from the works of nature, of Providence, and from Revelation, is no less true and real, though it is relative and analogical. 1. Because man was created in the image of God, and hence we are certain, that there is a real resemblance and a true correspondency between the faculties, perfections and operations of the human soul, and the infinite perfections of the divine nature of God. Though his attributes are incomparably greater, than all similar faculties in man; yet they must be of the same nature. For otherwise, how could we be exhorted to imitate them? or how could our conceptions of them be true? 2. Because we are formed to the absolute necessity of this kind of knowledge concerning God and the invisible world; and we are certainly made, to know and serve our Maker. 3. Because God has revealed himself in this way to man in his word, in which he expresses his infinite attributes, his nature, and actions, by terms indicative of the actions and faculties of the human soul; and the immaterial objects of the intellectual world, by the names of things in this world—and He certainly cannot deceive us. For this purpose he exalted the minds of his servants to those uncommonly majestic, and sublime hieroglyphics, formed of such refined and precious substances, which of all others in nature, bear the nearest resemblance and relation to things divine and supernatural. And these lofty images also indicate the nearest approach of the human mind to objects of the invisible world, and the uttermost extent of reason, in that kind of knowledge. Though the faculties of our souls are capable of great cultivation and improvement, and even possessed in very different degrees by many persons; yet they are every where bounded by the same limits, as to objects of an immaterial and di-

vine nature. The doctrine of a central faculty, or of a secret principle of truth, by which our views could be extended beyond the rational powers of our minds, into a direct and immediate prospect of the immaterial world, is certainly the production of a disturbed brain. It would even be absurd to contend, that the minds of prophets had been exalted by the Almighty, so as to be capable of a direct and immediate view of God, or an adequate knowledge of the spiritual world; for that would have made them equal to infinite perception. After these remarks I will now attempt to explain this vision.

In my opinion, this and the following chapter should be considered after the manner of the *mystical allegory*, or *double prophecy* of the Old Testament: 1. As an emblematical representation of the *Church of God* in all ages, and of the *gradually increasing alliance*, and relation between Him and his people, especially under the Christian dispensation. 2. As a prophetic delineation of the form of Christ's kingdom during the Millennium. In common prophecy the primitive meaning of the words is dropped, and the figurative only is retained: but in this, the figurative sense requires an increasing completion, until all the features of the whole image are identified, and placed before the eyes of the Church at one entire view.

Verse 1. After this I looked, and, behold! a door *was* opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will thee things which must be hereafter.

2. And immediately I was in the Spirit: and behold! a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne.

3. And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald.

Thus opens the great theatre of heavenly visions, to which the holy seer St. John was raised by a second ecstasy. The Lord Jesus raised the curtains, and the Churches beheld the most exalted and interesting scenes—the tabernacle of God with men. How marvellous is his loving kindness, in discovering such divine things to mortal man ! Let earth and heaven raise one chorus, to magnify his name.

Verse 2. *I was in the spirit.* St. John had returned from his first vision, where he beheld Christ in the midst of the golden candlesticks, with seven stars in his right hand, in order to write the seven charges. His mind was now again withdrawn from all visible objects, and fixed by the command of a clear, loud, and sonorous voice, as of a trumpet ; so that it appeared to him, as if his soul was transported into heaven, where he beheld the profound mysteries of eternity.

*A throne was set in heaven.* There certainly is no throne in heaven, upon which God should sit. A throne is an emblem of power, authority and government. This throne denotes the supreme dominion, which God exercises over the world in his Church. It is not the eternal throne of his Godhead, from which he gives laws to the Universe ; but that, which *was set* at the creation, in establishing his Church on this earth. This is the archetype to the throne of God in the temple at Jerusalem, Isa. vi. 1. Jer. xvii. 12. and in the tabernacle, where he dwelled between the cherubims, Ps. xcix. 1. 1 Sam. iv. 4. Job i. 6. 1 Kings xxii. 19. revealed himself to Moses, and in succeeding times, answered the questions of the high priest concerning church and state. Exod. xxv. 17. The original word *ἐκειτο*, from *καίμαι*, signifies to *lay down*, to *place along*, by which the size of this throne is intimated, as being very large and broad ; and accordingly he who sat on it, though in human form, far exceeded the size of a man. The Lord is in his holy temple in Zion ; let all the earth

keep silence before Him, Habak. ii. 20. He dwelleth under the praises of Israel: declare among the people his doings. Ps. xxii. 3. ix. 11.

Verse 3. *And he that sat was like a jasper and a sardine stone.* He that sat on this throne is God the Father, the Ancient of days, in distinction from the Lamb, which was in the midst of the throne, and from the Holy Ghost, who is represented by seven lamps of fire. The apostle describes his external appearance and colour, as like unto the precious stones *Jasper* and *Sardius*, which no doubt, are here intended to express the various perfections of his divine nature, as perspicuous in his government, particularly during the *first ages of the world*. The Sardine is red, and at least half transparent, the Jasper is white, cerulean, and has small red veins; both would make up the appearance of a Being, of nearly flesh-colour, but of a more refined substance, partly bright, clarified, and exceedingly glorious. *White*, denotes purity, holiness and justice; *red*, signifies judgment, and fiery indignation against the wicked; and the durability of these gems, that He is eternal, immutable in his nature, and all his promises and threatenings most sure. Thus far the God of nature was known from his works and by tradition, to the *antedeluvian world*, as represented by these emblems.

*A rainbow round about the throne, like unto an emerald.* The throne of the supreme Governor of the world, was with respect to its height, or more properly its breadth, encompassed by a rainbow, in order to keep those about the throne at a proper distance. This bow is the archetype of that in the clouds, which the Lord promised Noah, as an eternal memorial of his covenant with him and his posterity, that he would no more destroy the world by a flood. Gen. ix. 12—16; and that seed time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night, shall not cease while the earth remaineth. Gen. viii. 22. The apostle compares the colour of this bow to



an emerald, which is an exceedingly fine green, and the stone itself very bright and transparent. This may denote, that the grace of God under *this covenant* towards the world shall always be in an improving state, and of everlasting duration.

Verse 4. And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold.

5. And out of the throne proceeded lightnings, and thunders, and voices: and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.

6. And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto a crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts full of eyes before and behind.

Verse 4. *Upon the seats four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment.* What are these elders? And whence came they? This they tell us themselves, chapter v. 9. 10. "Thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God, kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth." Though these elders are from every tongue and nation on earth, yet when their whole character is considered, as described, they are not the representatives of *all mankind*, nor of the *visible Church* of Christ on earth, nor of the general number of the *elect*. If we compare their own confession with Rev. xx. 4. they represent those *chosen spirits, and witnesses of Jesus* throughout the world, who, as an equivalent for having lost their lives for Christ's sake, shall rise in the first resurrection, and reign with Christ during the Millennium. And with regard to this their future appointment, and proper theatre of action, they are spoken of twice in the future tense:

verse 9. καὶ ὅταν δώσουσι. *And when they shall give glory*, in connexion with the elders; and chap. v. 10. βασιλεύσομεν, *we shall reign on earth*. In reference to these elders, the Jewish church had established twenty-four courses of priests, 1 Chron. xxiv. 1. 4. 18. Luke i. 5. who served by turns in the temple at Jerusalem—and twenty-four Levites, as deputies of the twelve tribes, who attended the service of the temple as their representatives, and transacted the business of their tribes at court, in the Sanhedrin, and with the priests. They are clothed in *white raiment*, from the custom of clothing those, who were admitted on account of their genealogies and perfection of body, to the court of the priests. In the original, their seats are also called *thrones*, and these, as well as their *crowns of gold*, and the circumstance of their *sitting* on these thrones, indicate their present appointment, and future royal priesthood in the kingdom of Christ on earth. They are particular saints, who have proved themselves worthy of this station, Isa. xxiv. 23. Hebrews xi. 2. at the head of their brethren. O ye combatants under the banners of Jesus! behold the glorious reward of faithfulness in trying seasons, and rise to follow their footsteps; the recompense is infinitely superior to the toil of the undertaking.

Verse 5. *Lightnings, thunderings and voices*. Lightnings refer to the sight, thunderings to sensibility, and voices to the sense of hearing. The allusion is evidently to the *Old Testament dispensation*, and the manner in which God revealed himself in giving the law on Mount Sinai. *Lightning* may allude to the discovery, which the Lord made to the Israelites of his own nature and character, in promulgating the moral law as the fundamental principle of his moral government over the world. *Thunderings* may refer to his promises and threatenings, blessings and curses, by which he excited the sensibility to the performance of his will. And the prophecies of the prophets are often

called the *voices* of the prophets, Acts xiii. 27. John the Baptist calls himself the voice of one in the wilderness John i. 23. Ps. ciii. 20. xxix. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8. 9.

*Seven lamps of burning fire.* The Holy Ghost, in allusion to the seven lamps in the tabernacle and temple. Seven is the number of fullness and perfection, in which he is always present in the Church, and communicates his illuminating, quickening and refreshing influence through his word and ordinances in all ages. This sevenfold communication is specified, Isaiah xi. 2. See chap. i. 4. iii. 1.

Verse 6. *Before the throne was a sea of glass, like unto crystal.* We are apt to conceive the theatre of this vision on too contracted a scale, which upon mature consideration of all the different-objects, must have been very wide and extensive. St. John beheld a spacious throne with a very broad pedestal, on which the four living beings formed a full circle with the throne, and before it an extensive pavement, broad and deep like a sea of crystal, above which stood the seven flames of fire. Around this sea of glass, the twenty-four elders formed a second circle with the throne of God, and at a proper distance behind the elders, millions of angels surrounded the whole. Chap. v. 11.

In order to understand the spiritual meaning of this sea, it is necessary to attend to the following remarks on the original. The learned Doctor S. R. Doederline says: It is customary with the Hebrews, to call a large plain *a sea*. And the original *θαλινος*, from *θαλος*, not only signifies *glass*, but the ancients also very frequently translate it *electrum*; which according to Theophrastus, is a collective mass of all the different precious metals, in a most refined and purified state. Chap. xxi. 18, it is said, that the city of New Jerusalem was built of pure gold, like purified *electrum*; and verse 21. that not the *street*, as we read in our common version, but *καὶ ἡ πλατεῖα* the *market-place* and centre of the city of God, immediately before the throne of God and the Lamb, was of pure gold, like transparent *elec-*

*trum*. This translation is also evidently correct from both passages. For why are the words *clear* and *transparent* added, if glass is to be understood, which is clear and transparent of itself? Why should its clearness be described in the text before us by crystal, when glass itself is a clear body? See Exod. xxiv. 10. There is, however, a difference between this sea, and the matter of which New Jerusalem is built; for here the sea itself is *electrum*, but in New Jerusalem, the gold is only compared to it. In allusion to this sea, of which Moses must have had a sight in the Mount, Exod. xxv. 40. Heb. viii. 5. Solomon overlaid the floor of the temple with gold. 1 Kings vi. 30. This extensive plain or pavement, wide and deep, before the throne, denotes the aggregate of *all revelation from God to men in all ages*; which is compared to the *sea*, because of the deep things of God, and the profound mysteries, and fulness of grace and mercy; *clear, like crystal*, because of the purity, perspicuity and evidence of the heavenly truths contained in it; *a solid mass of precious metals*, to denote the different value of these truths, and the firmness, durability, union and connexion of the whole. This transparent massy plain formed a *circuit* before the throne, so that the throne partly rested on this stable foundation, the rainbow reflected his seven colours in it, and the seven lamps their flames of fire—the Lamb stood on it, right in the midst between the elders and the living creatures—the Mediator between God and man, whose image the Church had long beheld in this revelation, as in a mirror. This is the mirror of eternity, in which we may behold God and our everlasting home. What a folly in Deists, to attempt removing such a mass, of which they neither know the depth, the value, nor consequence!—to attempt to disfigure the workmanship of Him, from whose throne proceed lightnings and thunder!

*Four beasts full of eyes before and behind.* This is a bad translation, which by no means conveys the proper sense



of the original. The Greek word is not *ἄνθρωπος*, *beast*, but *ζῶον*, from *ζάω*, (from which word the Grecians call God *Ζεῦς*) and should be rendered a *living Being*, or a *Being full of lives*. Upon the subject of these *Beings of life*, expositors have collected a variety of opinions, which it would be useless to repeat. I will therefore place the mind of my reader at once into that circuit of ideas, in which he may view this elucidation to advantage.

The Revelation treats every subject of its contents on a general scale, and each particular part in a continued relation to the whole design, and final aim of heaven. This therefore, is in a peculiar sense the Book, in which we may expect to meet with grand and comprehensive thoughts. The Church of God on earth is here represented as a divine institution and system of education, in which chosen nations are gradually instructed, and trained up, to be a ferment in the whole mass of mankind for eternal purposes. This extensive institution has different departments, in which those qualified, have been advanced from one course of heavenly lessons of knowledge and discipline to another. In each of these departments the Lord has gradually discovered himself, and the sublime objects of the intellectual world, according to the sense the chosen people of God felt of their own wants; by which they were also fitted for the reception of such discoveries, and induced to ask, and search for such knowledge, as necessary to their happiness. There are four such *Church-states*, or departments in the general Church of God on earth, of which these *Beings of lives*, in the text before us, are the emblematical representatives. These are the following:

I. The Patriarchal Church economy, during the time of promise, before Moses, which is here represented by that *Being of life like a lion*. This figure expresses the distinguishing characteristics of the whole body of the Church during that time; which are *boldness* of faith in the promises of God; *courage* in the service of the Lord, *strength*

against the enemy, *natural liberty*, not yet incumbered by a load of precepts for Church discipline. The lessons which they were taught, participated of the same characteristics. They learned to know God from his works—his natural and moral government over the world, from the ways of Providence—hopes of the recovery of mankind from moral ruin, by the promised *Seed* of the woman.

II. The *Mosaic economy*, which is here represented by that Being of life *like a calf or ox*. This figure has been a hieroglyphic of great import, from ancient times. The Egyptians made their God *Apis* after it, to whom they paid divine honours in a living ox; and the Hindoos still worship these beasts as divinities. The distinguishing characteristic of this figure is *indefatigable laboriousness, under the yoke, for the general good of man*. This character is very applicable to the Old Testament institution. We all know the round of ceremonies under the law, that heavy load of precepts and discipline in the Jewish church, and the general laboriousness of this people in bearing so heavy a yoke to this day. But as the ox also served for a *sacrifice*, so this institution was acceptable to the Lord, and induced many, to devote themselves entirely to God and his service during many centuries. The principal lessons taught in this department were an enlarged and authoritative republication of natural religion as known before, with a more immediately introductory dispensation of Providence, carried on by the Messiah for the recovery and salvation of the human family, by rendering satisfaction to the righteous Governor of the world.

III. The *Christian economy*, which is represented by that Being of life with *the face of a man*. This figure indicates, that every part of this dispensation requires, and bespeaks the *use of reason and experience*; that its religion are lessons of real *knowledge*, and the worship *rational*; that the arrangement of the whole economy bespeaks *humanity and mercy*, and the administration of it *wisdom and*

*prudence*, according to the final aim of heaven, for which it has been established. The heavenly lessons taught in this department are, an enlarged republication of natural religion in its genuine simplicity, by which we are instructed, that this world is the work, and under the natural and moral government of an all perfect, wise, benevolent and Omnipotent Being, whose law is virtue, and whose judgments are righteous, in this world and in the world to come.—An elucidation of all the essential points in the introductory dispensation of the Messiah, since the creation. And a full discovery of that marvellous plan for the redemption of the world, by Jesus Christ (who now assumed the form of a man,) and the Holy Ghost.

IV. From this institution, the Revelation informs us, we are to be advanced into that economy, which will be established during the Millennium, properly called *the personal kingdom of Jesus Christ*, and of the people of God on earth. This dispensation is represented here by that living Being *like a flying eagle*, which figure may denote, as general characteristics of this economy, a *ready swiftness* in obeying the divine commands; great *penetration* and *sagacity* to discover errors, enemies and danger; a particular *capability to soar on high* into the divine councils, and mysteries of God; a *steady look* by the eye of faith into the eternal sun of righteousness, the fountain of primeval light in the world of spirits; and an incessant endeavour *to soar aloft towards it*, as the final destination of man, and the centre point of all spiritual activity, without ever being able to approach it in all eternity. This economy will again be as much elevated above the present, as the Christian is above the Mosaic, by an enlarged republication of all the truths of former dispensations, and many new discoveries of God to man. Those qualified for this department, will be saints indeed.

Verse 7. And the first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a

face as a man, and the fourth beast *was* like a flying eagle.

3. And the four beasts had each of them six wings about *him*; and *they were* full of eyes within: And they rest not day and night, saying, holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.

*Full of eyes before, and behind, and within.* These four Beings are very properly called ζῶα, and represented as large conservatories of many lives; for by them the Lord both preserves, nourishes and propagates the spiritual life in his people on earth. They are said, to be all alike *full of eyes*, by which, I apprehend, we are to understand the *ministers* of the word of God, and his *special servants*, the seers, the prophets, the apostles and reformers, by which, as principal teachers in these divine institutions of education and discipline, these economies have been managed and conducted. The eyes *before*, directed towards the throne, in order to watch the commands of Almighty God, may denote the prophets, and extraordinary servants under the immediate inspiration of the Lord. The eyes *behind*, directed towards the *sea of electrum*, denote the ordinary ministers, who have need to look into the Scriptures of truth, to search their sense, and pry into their spiritual meaning; to overlook the flock, committed to their charge; to espy enemies and danger, and give the necessary notice of them, from the appearing signs of the times, according to prophecies and the sure word of God. The eyes *within*, may represent all the children of God in these economies, as endowed with spiritual light and knowledge by divine illumination; or the body of these beings of life may denote the people of God under these dispensations, and the *eyes within*, those ministers particularly instrumental in promoting the internal prosperity of Zion, and the life of God in the souls of men.



Verse 8. *The four beasts had each of them six wings.* The living creatures in Ezekiel i. 6. had four wings, and the seraphims, Isa. vi. 2. had six also ; which more immediately belong to the whole body of these beings of life, and no doubt, express certain virtues, common to all the children of God, in all ages. The prophet Isaiah informs us of their use. With two they covered their *faces* through reverence, from the beams of venerated glory, too bright for seraphims themselves to behold. With two they covered their *feet*, by which is indicated a deep sense of their sinfulness, weakness and imperfection in all, and even their best works, as the foundation of that cardinal virtue humility. And with the other two they *fly*, signifying their readiness to fulfil the command of the Lord to the best of their power.

*They rest not day and night, saying, holy, holy, holy.* O blessed restlessness ! There is no night in heaven, only here on earth, where these Beings of life exist. They are wholly devoted to the service of God, in which they live, and move, and possess spiritual life. Their whole existence is penetrated by a deep sense of the holiness of this Triune God, Father, Son, and Spirit ; by which they are animated and directed to an incessant and perpetual worship, either more or less, in every hour by day or night, throughout the whole economy. This word ἅγιος, holy, and in Isaiah *kadosch*, signifies a thing separated from all things common, and solely devoted to sanctified purposes ; but when used of God, it denotes his infinite perfection and supreme excellence in every power and virtue constituting his Deity, which finite beings may endeavour to imitate, but never fully attain. This supreme excellency of God in all his moral attributes they praise continually, to shew the beauty which they behold in it, and their earnest endeavour after holiness in person, doctrine, life, and conversation. They also praise him as the *Lord* of his Church, as *God*, the only object of worship—as the Al-

mighty, *παντοκράτωρ*, the supreme ruler of the Universe—which *was*, *is*, and *is to come*.

Verse 9. And when those beasts give glory, and honour, and thanks, to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever,

10. The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying,

11. Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.

Here the tense changes, and runs on in the future.

Verse 9. *δώσουσι*, and when they shall or will give glory. Verse 10. *πρὸςκύνονται*, when they will fall down. *βαλοῦσι*, they shall cast down their crowns. By this change of tenses we are referred to a future period, when the sublime machinery of this chapter will meet its full completion, in the personal kingdom of Christ on earth during the Millennium. This kingdom will fill the whole earth, and will be divided into four different economies, in which the four and twenty elders; and with them the holy Martyrs will rule with Christ, as kings and priests on earth a thousand years, as an equivalent for the sacrifice they made for Christ's sake. When these four Beings of life encompass the four parts of the world, and fall down in unanimous worship; the elders will likewise cast down all their power and authority at the feet of the Lamb, and govern the human family in perfect compliance with his will and pleasure. Then will the Lord receive *glory* for his sufferings, *honour* for his humiliation, and the *thanks* of a formerly-ungrateful world.—He, for whose pleasure the world has been created, Rom. xi. 36.

these economies established, and mankind trained to confess freely, and from deep conviction, that he is worthy of this doxology.

My exposition of this chapter has been rather full, because it has been new on many points ; the following shall be more brief.

## CHAPTER V.

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A SERENE and solemn contemplation of this theatre of heavenly visions, ought to convince every reflecting mind of its Divine origin. The spiritual sensibility excited by this view, far surpasses all, which the most pompous scenery of Greek or Roman poets could ever produce. Behold the appearance of God in powerful majesty, seated on his throne of government, in the midst of refulgent flashes of lightnings, thunderings, and voices: attended by the four Living Beings as ministers of state, under the symbols of royal boldness, indefatigable activity, prudence, and heavenly-mindedness, and furnished with wings, and thousands of eyes, to observe and execute the Divine mandates:—Their attitude; standing before the throne, penetrated with reverence:—the sea of *electrum*, forming a spacious circuit before Jehovah, in which the seven flames of fire, waving immediately over its surface, reflect their glorious light, and every other object in heaven, as in a mirror:—around this sea twenty-four thrones, on which sit his royal subjects, perfected saints:—and the whole surrounded by many millions of angels—all these engaged in rapturous songs of praise—in acclamations of holy, holy, holy! what a glorious scene! what terrible majesty!

Although this vision is an emblematical representation of the Church of God on earth; yet, I have no hesitation to say, that these sublime symbols may also represent real objects in the intellectual world. For after God has accom-



plished all his divine purposes on earth, this world will be a perfect resemblance of heaven. But what convinces my mind most, is a comparison of this vision with that recorded in Ezekiel, chapt i. and x : with that of Isaiah vi ; and with that which Moses beheld on the Mount, Exod. xxv. 40. Hebrews viii. 5 ; according to which he constructed the tabernacle, and all the holy instruments and vessels appertaining to its service, which St. Paul informs us, were only the shadow and example of heavenly things. This St. Paul could say, from having been an eye-witness, after he was caught up to a view of heaven and paradise, where also he saw these archetypes of all the machinery in the Old Testament dispensation, though perhaps only in a partial view. But a more minute elucidation of these objects in that respect, would, I presume, be visionary, and of little benefit to many readers.

This chapter now, commences the Revelation of the mystery of God to his Church. These great personages rise, one after the other to the theatre of action, till at certain interesting nodes, all the powers of heaven and hell are engaged in the prosecution of their different views. But the Lamb of God, which here receives his commission in a book from the throne, exercises his authority in many direful conflicts against the powers of darkness, and appears at last as supreme Ruler of the world, adorned with many crowns, as conqueror of all his enemies.

Verse 1. And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne, a book written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals.

2. And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?

3. And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon.

*He that sat on the throne* is here represented, as administering the government of the world and the Church to that period of time. Until then He held the book in his hand—then Jehovah gave the Revelation to Jesus Christ, chap. i. 1; but before that time its contents were not known to the angels in heaven, neither to the Son, but to the Father only. Mark xiii. 32. His *right hand* denotes his all-governing power.

*A book written within and on the backside.* This book is a symbol of the Divine plan of administration, formed by eternal wisdom concerning the government of the world and the Church, until then hidden in the treasures of the Almighty. Deut. xxxii. 34. It appeared to the apostle a *long roll* of Egyptian paper, or parchment, rolled up in form of a cylinder, to shew that it contains a large account of a long train of events to be accomplished. Whatever concerned the Church, and its members is the several ages of time, was written *within* this roll; and that which concerned the world and the Roman empire, was contained on *the outside*. For it regards both the Christian Church and the world.

*Sealed with seven seals.* To show, that to open this book, it required a person having the command of seven different powers, in reference to the Lamb with seven horns and seven eyes; or as *seven* is the number of fullness and perfection, that it required one, possessed of all power in heaven and earth. The word *sealed*, here signifies that this book of God's decrees, as the rule and measure of his government, was yet unknown and unaccomplished.

Verse 2. *A strong angel proclaiming, who is worthy to open?* If the human mind could extend its faculties, (if I may be allowed the expression,) to the confines of the material and immaterial world, where the uttermost ends of human thoughts are directed by invisible powers, and all creation by the Divine influence of God—what a scene

of relations and activity would we behold between nature and its God, man and his Creator, the Church militant, and the Church triumphant, and her supreme head. To this sphere the apostle was exalted, and his mind beheld the first avenues, through which this train of human affairs on earth is influenced and directed by heaven. Here a heavenly herald, a strong angel sounds his voice through the three regions of creation, *heaven, earth, and Hades*, making proclamation: *If any person had knowledge, dignity, and power sufficient to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof, that he was desired to come, and to do it!* History has recorded the *echo* of his voice on earth, at the close of the first century. The Christians expected the second advent of the Lord, and the accomplishment of the mystery of God concerning the Church; and now they were cruelly persecuted by Jews and Gentiles, and all began to be seriously alarmed about her future prosperity and continuance. All future prospects seemed involved in profound darkness. Even St. John appears to have suffered by these heart-rending thoughts, on the isle of Patmos. Thus a unanimous and ardent desire arose in the Christian Church for more light and knowledge under this mysterious dispensation—or in the words before us, for opening the seals of the book of prophecy. Also both Jews and Heathens were alarmed at the progress of Christianity, and asked their oracles for information. The holy martyrs went with this prayer in their hearts, into the world of spirits; and the consummated saints in heaven asked with this angel, and wishfully waited for the answer. Of this general inquiry and desire, this angel seems to have been the cause and director. What a mighty angel he must be! Perhaps Gabriel, whose very name signifies, *the strong and mighty one of God?*

*To open the book and to loose the seals thereof.* The meaning here is not merely to loose the seals, and to open the book, in order that it might be read. This would have

been no great difficulty with such a roll, as John had seen. No, the import of this proclamation is also emblematical, and in figurative words. The sense is : 1. Who possesses ability and knowledge sufficient to understand the whole plan of administering the government of the world and of the Church, as contained in this book of God's decrees, in order to explain it to others, as it is done in the following chapters of the Revelation. 2. Who possesses dignity and power to administer this government, and to execute all these Divine decrees according to this plan of measures, so as to fulfil and accomplish all the prophecies and purposes of heaven. This was the arduous undertaking for the performance of which all creation confessed their inability. None were able !

Verse 4. And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon.

5. And one of the elders saith unto me, weep not : behold, the lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof.

6. And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God, sent forth into all the earth.

7. And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne.

Verse 4. *I wept much.* So loud did the echo of the angel's voice resound in his soul—so much was he oppressed by the spirit of that time, and the sanguinary persecution under the emperor Domitian—so ardent was his desire for a discovery of the future prospects of the Church, that he wept ; because he believed this book contained a revelation of her future destinies, and no man



was found qualified, to explain, or undertake its accomplishment. He even wept much. The opening of this book has cost tears, but its accomplishment will occasion many more.

Verse 5. *One of the elders saith, weep not, &c. &c.* It is true, the most mighty and powerful angels in heaven are unequal to this task, though they have performed actions of great renown—wonders of eternity! Yet Jesus Christ, the *Lion of Judah*, Gen. xlix. 9. the *root of David*, on whom the seven fold Spirit of Jehovah rests, Isa. xi. 1. 2. has accomplished *such an arduous enterprise* in the redemption of the world; by which he proved himself qualified, worthy, and willing, also to execute this mighty scheme of administration, without which the momentous designs and purposes of heaven in the death of Jesus, could not be fully attained. Therefore, dear John, weep not. This satisfied the holy seer, and now he looked about for this great and able personage, whom his eager eye had not yet espyed, because of his diminutive appearance among so many glorious objects.

Verse 6. *In the midst stood a Lamb, as it had been slain, &c. &c.* *ἀρνίον*, even signifies a *young tender lamb*. He is thus represented, because his pilgrimage on earth was very limited in comparison with that of the ancient patriarchs, whose protracted existence embraced even many centuries; but also on account of a striking resemblance between the innocent qualities of a lamb, and the perfections of his humanity, which he manifested in his mediatorial office. Our Saviour's exaltation began with his resurrection. Since that time great things have passed, concerning Him in the invisible world, Heb. ii. 8. 9. In his ascension, angels, authorities, and powers were made his subjects, 1 Pet. iii. 22. Ten days after, he sent the promise of the Father, the Holy Ghost. And here he receives his commission in a book from the throne, and commences the government of the world. He stood in the

*midst* of the throne of the eternal Father, who probably sat on one side—in the midst of the four Beings of life, or in the heart of his Church—in the midst of the twenty-four elders, the representatives of all his holy martyrs and witnesses in the world of Spirits. This illustrates his excellence, dignity, and ability. *As it had been slain.* He yet had the marks of his sufferings and death upon him—the print of the nails and spear in his hands, feet and side, fresh as lately slain. O how can he forget his people! How can the eternal Father behold his Son and deny his mercy to the world! Why should we not have perfect confidence in him?

*Having seven horns and seven eyes.* Horns denote power, great ability, and in the prophetic writings, kings and kingdoms. Dan. viii. 20. 21. and vii. 24. Christ is called the horn of David, and the horn of salvation, Ps. cxxxii. 17. Luke i. 89. Eyes denote wisdom, knowledge, sagacity, foresight and providence. These eyes more particularly denote the seven Spirits of God, which Christ received without measure. Thus he is here represented, as every way qualified to open this book of God's decrees, and to administer the government of the world and the Church, by a perfect completion of the whole plan of infinite wisdom, concerning the restoration of the human family to favour, and glory. *He took the book,* and thus assumed the authority and government with perfect assurance, and the complaisance of the eternal Father.

Verse 8. And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints.

9. And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed

us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.

10. And hast made us unto our God, kings and priests, and we shall reign on the earth.

Verse 8. *The four beasts and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb.* Here the doctrine of Christ's divinity is fully established. All his economies, churches, saints; faithful ministers, martyrs, and witnesses pay him divine honours as God, and the Mediator between God and man, by way of religious worship; and all this in the presence of the eternal Father, and in the face of heaven. O what stupidity, and wickedness, to deny the Lord that bought us! 2 Pet. ii. 1. To blaspheme him on earth, whom all heaven adores, is Satan-like.

The ancient *harp*, was an instrument of music with ten strings, which was not sounded by the hand, but by a certain tool, at divine service, 2 Sam. vi. 5. Ps. xxxiii. 2. and on particular occasions of great joy.

*Golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers, &c.* In allusion to these vials, they had golden censers in the temple at Jerusalem, in which *incense*, or *odours*, were daily burned, and the sweet smell ascended to heaven. These *odours* are not symbols of the prayers themselves, but of their being *acceptable*, *regarded*, and *remembered* before God. Neither do the elders here act the part of mediators for the praying saints; but that of divine messengers, who like the angel that was sent to Cornelius, Acts x. inform the saints on earth, by spiritual signs and tokens, that their prayers are come up for a memorial before God, and will be answered in due season. Heb. i. 14. Whenever they make such a communication to the saints, then the smoke of the sweet odours ascendeth up before God out of their hands, and the saints feel the heavenly tune of their hearts touching every fibre of sensibility. For the scene of this vision is not actually in heaven, but in the Church on earth; and it is here, where the elders kindle the fire of these odours in the hearts of saints. Ac-

according to this idea of the subject, the holy Martyrs constitute a separate spiritual priesthood, arranged into twenty-four courses, the heads of which are these elders, to whom are assigned this employment at present, among the saints on earth. O Christian! remember when you pray, that some one of these holy martyrs is kneeling by your side, to worship the same Lord and Saviour with you, and to signify to you, that your prayer is acceptable. Remember, you are praying in the congregation of angels. The whole import of this figure then is, that this royal priesthood on this occasion offered themselves, their commissions and offices, as a living sacrifice, and confessed allegiance to Jesus, the Lamb of God, upon his entering on the administration of his government.

Verse 9. *And they sung a new song.* The original word ὦδῃ, song, signifies *a piece of poetry, a hymn put in metre*, so that it can be sung like the Psalms of David, or other hymns of praise and worship. See Eph. v. 19. Col. iii. 16. in the original. This here is entitled *a new song*, because it was just then made on a new occasion, when the Saviour undertook the government of the world and the Church; and because its contents were a new discovery, which the elders had only then made concerning their future appointment on earth. Of this song the prophet Isaiah has spoken, xlii. 10. and throughout the whole of that chapter. The subject of this heavenly ode is expressed in the following words: *Thou art worthy.* This is a deliberate and public confession of their own conviction, concerning the knowledge, ability, dignity, and power of the Lamb, to explain and execute the divine scheme of government as contained in this book; and a free acknowledgement of their allegiance to him. For this proceeding they give the annexed reason: *for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood.* There was a time, when angels desired to look into the marvellous plan of redemption, 1 Pet. i. 12; but since the ascension of Jesus Christ,



that great and mysterious scheme of salvation has been fully exhibited, and excites the admiration and delight of heaven. The four Beings of life, and the elders knew of no one worthy and capable, of all the mighty and excellent in heaven, who had ever performed an enterprize that could inspire such confidence, except the Lamb in the redemption of mankind. The Lamb who undertook and executed that scheme, He is worthy of the throne. His blood and sufferings are the price of our redemption—a great price indeed !

*Out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.* Here both those *Beings of lives*, and the elders tell us who, and from whence they are. They are *redeemed* by the blood of the Lamb—They are of *all nations* on the earth. This passage does not prove, that only the elect were redeemed, it only evinces, that these enjoyed the fruits of the redemption of Christ. Dan. iii. 4. Col. i. 23. These four words may refer to the four parts of the world.

Verse 10. *And hast made us unto our God kings and priests.* The learned and pious Bengelius reads here βασιλείαν, a kingdom, pro βασιλεῖς, kings. The Church of Christ is now a spiritual kingdom, John xviii. 36; but in the Millennium, during the thousand years reign of Christ on earth, it will be a kingdom in every sense of the word: and then the four Beings of life will be his kingdom, for the elders say, βασιλευσόμεν, *we wil reign* as kings on the *earth*. At present they are only priests, but then they shall be as kings and priests on earth, Rev. xx. 4. 5. 6. as a compensation for the sacrifice they made of their lives, for the sake of Christ and his doctrine.

Verse 11. And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the beasts, and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands;

12. Saying with a loud voice, worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.

*The voice of many angels.* An innumerable company. Daniel saw such a number, chap. vii. 10. Ps. lxxviii. 17. They were angels and not separate spirits of men, for they do not say, that the Lamb redeemed them. Those which the Lamb has redeemed, the four Beings of life, and the elders, were nearer to the throne than they, because the saints are the heirs of salvation, and the Church is the bride of the Lamb. This innumerable company of angels is said to have encompassed the whole scene; because they are servants of God, and ministering Spirits to the Churches, and guardians to believers, whom they protect from enemies and dangers, and perform many thousand good offices. Heb. i. 14. Rev. i. 1. Acts xxvii. 24. Acts xvi. 9. 10. 2 Kings vi. 16. 17.

Verse 12. *Worthy is the Lamb.* Thus all the heavens testify of his qualification and worthiness of the throne, and freely acknowledge their allegiance, in order to serve under his command. These *seven* words of praise may allude to the seven horns and eyes of the Lamb, and to the divine purposes, which he is to accomplish by them. Thus one division after the other declares the worthiness of the Lamb, and acknowledges allegiance: first the visible Church and people of God in these four economies, and all his holy martyrs; secondly, all the hosts of heaven; and thirdly, in the next verses, the whole human race on earth, and in Hades under the earth—God and the whole Universe, Deists deviate from them all, and are the enemies of all. Luke xix. 14. But his citizens hated him, and sent a message *ὀπίσω αὐτοῦ λεγοντες*, *behind his back*, (through the country) saying we will not have Him to reign over us.

Verse 13. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, *be* unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.

14. And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever.

It would appear from this chapter, that the eternal Father revealeth his Son in a gradual manner both in heaven and earth, and that Jesus Christ manifests himself only by his works, and the performance of marvellous enterprises; until at last the whole Universe is brought, freely to confess his superiority in every point of view, even in his manhood, and to acknowledge allegiance from a full knowledge and conviction of his worthiness, by his admirable deeds. The universal homage of all creation, animate and inanimate, as recorded in these verses, did not actually take place at the time when John beheld this vision. Neither did the Lamb really then only open the book, and undertake the government, which certainly must have happened before the destruction of Jerusalem, since that judgment is ascribed to him. All this is a prophetic vision, of the gradual extension of the Saviour's kingdom, and acknowledged authority to the end of time. John v. 23. Phil. ii. 9. 10. 11.

## CHAPTER VI.

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### I. SEAL, ACCOMPLISHED FROM A. D. 72—to 122.

Verse 1. And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four beasts saying, Come and see.

2. And I saw, and behold a white horse; and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering and to conquer.

When the Lord made this Revelation to St. John, the situation of the Church of Christ was peculiarly critical. Jerusalem and her temple, the former people and Church of God lay in total ruin; which in its holy records had many glorious promises not yet fulfilled. The banners of the Church had been planted in many countries, and her ministers every where met with great success, in enlisting many valiant soldiers for the service of the Lord. Jews and Gentiles were alarmed, at this rapid propagation of the Gospel; and the Christians were in full expectation of the approach of the personal kingdom of Christ on earth, which should encompass the whole world. In the midst of this full tide of prosperity, the Church of Christ was arrested by the cruel persecutions of the Roman emperors, Nero and Domitian, revived Paganism in all its abominations, and threatened Christianity with utter destruction. Idolatry was every where again vigorously supported by



the powers of this world, the self-interested views of a host of priests, and the corrupt passions of man : but the religion of Jesus was accounted foolishness, an enemy to the state and to mankind, and only maintained herself by the truth of her doctrine, and the holy lives of her disciples. When the Christians saw all their hopes thus crossed, and all their wishes frustrated, many thousands fell into doubts, perplexing temptations and fears, concerning the truth and divine origin of the Christian religion, and her final success on earth. Short-sighted reason argued thus : If Jehovah be the author of Christianity, and Jesus Christ the Son of God, then our religion must finally prevail, and all the promises concerning the welfare of Zion, will surely be accomplished ; but the natural probability from the violent opposition of the world, is against us, and Paganism is victorious from the throne to the cottage. It is not impossible that we may be deceived. Man perhaps is doomed to wander in darkness, doubt and perplexity, through the valley of this world, forlorn, and ignorant of a life to come, without a true knowledge of his Maker and his God. All those miracles which we have seen, and which are preached unto us, may be the effects of superior beings, unknown to us, or from latent causes in nature, and we destined, to be the sport of an inferior Demiurgus, or a deceitful Governor of this world. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable, 1 Cor. xv. 19. O that God in whom we trust, would take pity on us, and pour light and comfort into our desponding hearts ! If this book had not opened the future prospects of the Church of Christ, these and similar doubts and perplexities would have arisen in the hearts of millions in every age, and the Church would this day as much as ever, need such a mighty support.

The principal wish and desire of the Church in those days of affliction was, to know the future prospects of Christianity in the Roman empire, and the final doom of Paganism. Both these important points were revealed,

by opening the first six seals of the heavenly roll; and thus all Christians received instruction and comfort. Each seal enclosed only those events, which should be brought about by Providence, during a determined space of fifty years; and not all the events which happened during that space of time, nor even all those which the historian would treat with principal concern. Here prophecy differs widely from profane history; it only takes notice of those dispensations, which were intended to effect the downfall of Paganism, and the success and prosperity of the Church and disciples of Jesus. All the glorious achievements of emperors and armies, which have no tendency to further the designs of heaven, are not considered as worthy of remembrance. They are mere actions of men, in which the Church of God is not immediately concerned, and are therefore undeserving of a place in the journal of Providence.

The whole Revelation then, contains a prophetic history of the Christian religion, of Christ and his Church. And this chapter begins the evolution of a series of Divine measures, by which the mystery of God was to be accomplished at different periods in the Roman empire, in order to procure a secure dwelling-place for the Church.

Verse 1. *Come and see.* The opening of these seals seems to have been attended with circumstances, peculiarly majestic. When the Lamb opened a seal, he also exhibited its contents by a hieroglyphic representation in the surrounding clouds. Here a rider on horseback passed in full view of the throne, and all its attendants, through this heavenly theatre of visions; and the first Being of life like a lion, with a tremendous voice, as the noise of thunder, called the holy seer to give particular attention, that nothing might escape his observation, which could benefit, instruct, or comfort his brethren.

Verse 2. *A white horse; and he that sat on him had a bow.* Expositors have differed widely in their explana-

tions of this seal. Bengelius has here seen the victories of the Romans under the emperor Trajan, and Dr. Yung the rapid propagation of the gospel during the first centuries. Thus, truth sometimes lies before our feet unobserved, and we search for it with great labour at a distance. Horses are instruments of war, and a white horse is an emblem of victory, conquest, and succeeding prosperity. This hieroglyphic represents the Lord Jesus Christ in a double point of view, to the unspeakable comfort of his afflicted Church. First, as conqueror of Judaism, and the Jewish nation, for having rejected him as their Messiah and King. When the Persian kings after a signal victory, offered sacrifices to the sun, they rode on white horses. On account of this victory it is said in the text, ἐδόθη, *a crown has, or had been given him*, as a thing which had been done sometime before this vision of St. John. Secondly, as directing all the conquests of the Romans, from this time to the accomplishment of his heavenly designs concerning his Church. The Roman generals used to ride white horses at the head of their armies, and their triumphal chariots were drawn by white horses. It is worthy of particular remark, that Daniel's prophecy concerning the limits of the Roman empire, Dan. vii. 7. 23. was not fully accomplished, till in the days of Trajan. He conquered from Anno. 108, in a few years, Armenia, Assyria, Mesopotamia, and even the countries beyond the Tigris; and extended the Roman dominion far beyond what Pompey had done towards the East, and to the full extent of the Macedonian empire. The Christians were alarmed by the immense power of the Romans, as they were always ready to support idolatry with all its abominations; but the Lord here informs his people, that he superintends the power of these conquerors of the world, and directs all their victories to the benefit of his Church. And accordingly, Gibbon asserts that by this overgrown power, the Romans weakened the centre of their empire, and thus ac-

celerated its dissolution. The Lord directed the Roman victories and conquests to the promotion of his Church and drove his arrows into the hearts of his enemies. Ps. xlv. All victories from henceforth, had a ruinous effect on the empire, and the Roman power began to sink from that time. Paganism lost its mighty hold, and fell into disrepute, until the whole empire became a province of the Lord Jesus.

Those expositors, who explain this seal only of the Lords spiritual conquests through his Church and religion, have, I presume, not sufficiently considered this subject. They represent this rider, as having a wholly separate and distinct object and employment, from the following riders: whereas the horse and rider under the first seal, must surely be explained in connexion with those under the second, third, and fourth seals, as having the execution of only a part of an enterprize, of the same nature with the rest. This explanation also perfectly accords with chap. xix. 11. Where this same rider again returns, after having gained *many crowns*, i. e. kingdoms and empires; for he went forth conquering and to conquer.

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## II. SEAL ACCOMPLISHED FROM A. D. 122—TO 172.

Verse 3. And when he had opened the second seal, I heard the second beast say, Come and see.

4. And there went out another horse *that was* red; and *power* was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword.

By the first seal the Christians were comforted concerning the extension of the Roman power in the East, es-



pecially those, who inhabited the conquered countries along the Euphrates and Tigris, not to imagine that Providence was smiling on a government, by which they were cruelly persecuted, and his Church disregarded. By the opening of this second seal the Lord discovered another cause, which would effect the downfall of this colossean power, the foreknowledge of which might prove to them of great benefit during its accomplishment, to strengthen their faith and to make them more cautious in times of danger. At the opening of the first seal, St. John was called on by the Lion, the image of heroic faith and actions, as expressive of the general character of the Church in those days; but now by the second, the image of industry and sufferings for the common good of man.

This *horse* denotes war, and his *red* colour blood and slaughter, which was to take place on *earth*, h. e. particularly on the continent of the Roman empire. By the opening of this seal therefore, the Christians received solemn warning in those countries, where God in righteous judgment had withdrawn the spirit of peace and reconciliation, and given men over to insurrection, sedition and rebellion, until at last the great sword severed all.

All this has actually taken place in the Roman empire during this period. Immediately on the death of Trajan, the provinces Armenia, Assyria, and Mesopotamia, revolted from the Romans; and the ensuing fermentations, wars and calamities, made those countries a very insecure place of residence for the Church. But this prophecy seems to refer more particularly to the intestine wars under Adrian against the Jews, and to their bloody insurrections, which began A. D. 133.

Since the destruction of Jerusalem the Jews had lost their own government, their laws of worship, and even their country, where they were forced to abandon the sepulchres of their fathers, and all those monuments of Divine love and favour, to the insolence of Pagans. As their return

was not prohibited by law, they soon collected again in their beloved country in great numbers, and raised their tents even among the ruins of Jerusalem. But their love of liberty, and burning revenge against the Romans, made them every where restless citizens. They often raised insurrections against the Greeks and Romans, and committed most horrible cruelties. In the neighbourhood of Cyrene they destroyed no less than 220,000 men; in Egypt and Cyprus 240,000; so that Adrian sent new colonies in order to re-populate the desolate places. But when Adrian began to rebuild Jerusalem, he filled it with Heathens, and even erected a Pagan temple for idolatrous worship within her walls, in consequence of which the Jews suddenly rose in rebellion throughout the whole Roman empire. An infamous impostor by the name of *Barochebas* inflamed their passions to the highest pitch of enthusiasm, by calling himself the *Star of Jacob*, under which title the Messiah had been promised, as the deliverer of Israel, Num. xxiv. 17. Akibas, the most famous among the Jewish doctors, and the principal families of that divided people, received him as their Messiah without any further proof, than believing that to be the time of his appearance. They chose him their leader, took many fortresses, and spread desolation, blood and slaughter, wherever they went, especially among the Christians in Judea, whom they persecuted with unaccountable fury. Rufus, the governor, could not stop their progress, though the emperor had sent him large supplies of troops; he therefore sent Julius Severus, the greatest general of his time, who subdued them with such immense blood and slaughter, as to deter them for ever from rising again. He destroyed fifty of their cities, and nine hundred eighty-five towns, and made Palestine almost a desert and solitary wilderness. The Jews lost more than 600,000 of their nation. So great was the slaughter, especially in Bithur, of men, women, and children, that the Jews say their blood ran

down into the main sea, that a horse might wade up to his nose in blood. From this time, their yoke became heavier than ever under the Roman empire, they were banished Judea, and forbidden ever to approach the holy city.

This overthrow of the Jewish nation was total, like that of their city and temple, and left them no hopes of recovery. They have drawn this judgment upon themselves, by their malignant opposition to the Church of Christ. They not only rejected, and put to death their Messiah, but also persecuted his disciples and followers with unaccountable malice, and destroyed their peace and happiness in every country, by presenting false accusations against them before the Roman tribunals. Thus they have added the blood of many thousand Christians to that of their prophets, and hastened their total ruin. And this is the effect of the great sword, given to the rider under this seal.

During this period also the third and fourth persecution raged in Asia with double fury, in which Polycarp and Justin honoured God by their deaths as martyrs. But this prophecy does not seem to refer to that legislative madness, which is all reserved for the fifth seal. These words only refer to those, who are capable of killing *one another*, which is not the disposition of Christians, and much less of the Christians of those days.



### III. SEAL ACCOMPLISHED FROM A. D. 172—TO 222.

Verse 5. And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, come and see. And I beheld, and lo, a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand.

6. And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, a measure of wheat for a penny, and

three measures of barley for a penny ; and *see* thou hurt not the oil and the wine.

This hieroglyphic denotes a famine, which was to happen during this period in the Roman empire, more remarkable for its universality and duration, than on account of the high degree of scarcity of the necessities of life. See Sam. iv. 7. 8. and chap. v. 10. Bread—grain is truly scarce, when it is no longer measured by measure, but weighed out by balances. *χοῖνιξ*, *Choenix* is a measure of about two pounds, the usual allowance in Xerxes's army, and among the Romans of a man per day ; and *δηνάριον*, a penny, was the usual hire of a labourer for a day. A man's daily wages then, would only buy himself bread, without any thing to eat with it, or any surplus for his family, or even for his own clothing. This scarcity would have fallen on the superfluities also, such as oil and wine, but the voice of Christ from the midst of the four Beings of life, limited it to the most necessary articles of subsistence.

Those historians, who have given us the lives of the emperors, and the particulars of their reign in detail, during this period, bear witness to such a famine in the Roman empire. It began during the last years of the reign of Antonine the philosopher, and lasted to the first years of the emperor Severus. There were alternately throughout the whole Roman empire sterility of crops, inundations, great droughts, barrenness of soil, immense exportations of grain, foraging during the many intestine wars, earthquakes, burning of towns, unnatural meteors and eclipses. Tertullian says, that during the reign of Antonine, each town and city in the empire had suffered a famine, and that the heavy rains, which had been the cause of it, were so numerous, as to threaten the world with a second deluge. The emperor, who had sold his precious furniture to prosecute the war, made the people great donations, out of his own private purse. During the reign of the emperor Commodus, says Echart in his Roman History, the



Tiber inundated a great part of the city of Rome, upon which followed a great famine, earthquakes, and infection of the air, by bloodless animalcules and insects. The scarcity ran so high, that the people in a violent commotion killed Cleander, the emperor's favourite. Severus at last made it a principal object, to supply their wants by importations from other countries. There neither was before nor after this period, a famine so general and of such long duration, as this had been.

And here I would answer an objection, which perhaps some of my readers are ready to make. They wish to read of more all-important events, as the completion of these seals, than what are here actually treated of. To this I answer: 1. When the Lord judges it necessary to comfort and strengthen his Church in any certain period by prophecy, he can only make choice of such events as according to his Divine prescience of things, actually take place during that time. The events themselves are not the principal objects to the Church, however great or small their influence on her prosperity may be; but the accomplishment of a divine prediction in those occurrences. This is what constitutes them prophecies—memorials and pledges of the Lord to his people. 2. These events are sufficiently important to the Church. The Christians were citizens of the Roman empire, and their lives and sublunary happiness were largely involved in its fate. By these prophecies they were informed of the extent of these calamities, which might diminish unnecessary fear, excite them either to fly from danger, where it was proper, or prepare to meet it in a becoming manner. 3. The Church of Christ in those days was as yet a young and tender infant, which, especially during the time of the bloody persecutions by the Romans, required perpetual aid and refreshment. The Lord, therefore, in each period gave her pledges of his favour and assistance, that she might continue faithful, and rise superior to the power of her enemies.

## IV. SEAL ACCOMPLISHED FROM A. D. 222—TO 272.

Verse 7. And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, come and see.

8. And I looked, and behold a pale horse; and his name that sat on him was death, and hell followed with him: and power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth.

The name of this rider fully corresponds with the colour of his horse. According to the same rule we may admit, that the rider on the white horse was *victory*; the rider on the red horse *war*; the rider on the black horse *famine*; and because all the judgments of God under the foregoing seals still continued, and here received new strength, this rider is emphatically called *death*. The holy seer beheld his frightful appearance, as he passed the theatre of visions before the throne of God. The colour of his horse was *χλωρός*, pale, a mixture of green and yellow, like faded, putrescent grass. *ᾗδης* as well as *scheol*, *hell*, signifies a spacious open gulf, or large cave under the earth. The ancients, who had more intercourse with the world of spirits than we, believed *Hades* to be a great solitary desert, into which all separate spirits are collected, before the determination of their final destiny. Isa. xiv. 1 Sam. xxviii. Death here denotes sudden death, as by pestilence, putrid fevers and other epidemics.

The *sword*, *hunger*, *death* and *beasts* are the four sore judgments of God, by which he punishes the opposition of diabolical nations. Ezek. xiv. 21. Lev. xxvi. 16. Jer. xxiv. 10. Ezek. vi. 12. They all raged dreadfully *during this period* in the Roman empire. *ἐόμφαία* not only signifies sword, but a *broad sword*, a *glave*, as used in

slaughter-houses, and indicates a most wanton and profuse shedding of human blood.

The Roman empire had suffered greatly by the repeated shocks of judgments under the former seals, but those inflicted under this seal, brought it almost to the brink of ruin. The whole empire was thrown into dreadful confusion by the mismanagement of many weak and incompetent emperors, and the imprudence of governors in the provinces. The soldiery lost all discipline and spirit of subordination—They murdered good emperors and publicly sold the empire to the highest bidder, as one would expose a commodity for money. Hence, without divination we may judge of their government, and the sufferings of the people. The emperor *Maximinus* killed more than 4,000 men, without any charge or judicial process against them. *Gallienus*, that cruel tyrant, depopulated many cities and towns by his barbarities, and daily exterminated three or four thousand of his soldiers, because he had discovered their intentions of creating a new emperor. During his reign thirty tyrants arose, who divided the empire between them, and whose extirpation caused streams of blood. In less than fifty years, more than twenty emperors died violent deaths, and the Roman empire was almost destroyed. *Probus* killed in different battles 400,000 Germans, besides what he lost himself; *Decius* 30,000 Goths; *Claudius* destroyed in different engagements 300,000 of the same people; and that cruel wretch, *Maximinus*, desolated Germany, with fire and sword to the distance of four hundred miles.

The Roman empire was most grievously afflicted by famine, A. D. 248, which was followed A. D. 250, by a pestilence of cruel and general rage. It began in Ethiopia, pervaded the East and every part of the Roman empire, and lasted fifteen years. There were times, when 5,000 died in one day within the city of Rome, and its course was no less fatal throughout the whole empire, in propor-

tion to their number of population. Perhaps there never was its equal in extent and duration.

This period is also marked, by five general persecutions of the Christians, in which many thousands perished by being thrown before *wild beasts*, and by the *savage* cruelties of the Roman emperors, governors and magistrates. These judgments swept away according to this prophecy, the fourth part of the earth: that is, the fourth part of the citizens of the Roman empire, during this period, did not die natural deaths—which is by no means improbable. These judgments befel the Church as well as the state, and fully express the import of the images under this seal.



#### V. SEAL ACCOMPLISHED FROM A. D. 272—TO 322.

Verse 9. And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held :

10. And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth ?

11. And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow servants also, and their brethren, that should be killed as they *were*, should be fulfilled.

The *four first seals* stand peculiarly connected among themselves by the internal order of this book of prophecy. At the opening of each of them, the hieroglyphic representation of their contents is introduced by one of those four



Beings of life around the throne of God; because they refer to events, which were to happen *solely* on earth, and within the limits of the Church, and to the extent of the sound of the gospel trumpet. The *following seals* are again connected, and comprise events in both the visible and invisible world, which therefore exceed the voice of these living creatures.

By the opening of this seal, the Lord informed his Church on three very material points, necessary for her to know, as she was now to pass the fiery ordeal, to prove her fidelity for ever.

I. *I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain.* Thus the Lord discloses the tenth and last general persecution, under the Roman emperor *Dioclesian*, which began A. D. 303, and was carried on under four successive edicts from the throne, by all sorts of torments and unspeakable cruelties, for ten years. The number of martyrs during this persecution was immense, among which were many characters distinguished for piety and learning. They are accounted no less than 144,000 persons. So great was the diligence and zeal of the Roman magistrates and the multitude, against the Christians, that their raving exertions were like to prove fatal to the Christian cause. At first they only pulled down the Christian churches, burned their books and writings, and deprived them of all civil rights and privileges; but at last their cruel minds impelled them to such brutal and shameful torments, as even decency forbids to describe. This being the most severe, and last of all the persecutions by Pagan Rome, is therefore here particularly noted, though all former martyrs are also comprehended under this seal.

II. *I saw under the altar the souls.* Here the Lord elevates the veil, and the Church beholds a glorious scene in the invisible world—the state of immortality, in which souls exist after their separation from the body, and the virtue and excellence of martyrdom. It was a generally

received opinion among the ancient fathers, that the souls of believers, after death, were clothed in ethereal bodies, in which they acted, and might even appear upon earth among the living, like the angels and the Son of God in ancient time, until the day of resurrection. Gen. xviii. 19. This opinion seems to be confirmed by this passage. St. John beheld them in human form, heard their exclamation, and saw them dressing in white robes. They therefore were not in a state of insensibility or sleep, but had full recollection of past events, consciousness of their present state, and from the many martyrs, which during that persecution daily increased their number, a perfect knowledge of what was transacting in the world. This information induced them *at that time*, to cry with a loud voice, i. e. with great ardour and fervency.

The holy seer beheld them under the altar of *burnt-offering*, by which they are represented to the comfort of their brethren on earth, as holy and acceptable sacrifices to the Lord, and in a place of protection and perfect safety. They knew, that they had been slain *for the word of God*, and for the [*μαρτυρίαν*, doctrine, religion of Jesus, chap. xx. 4.] testimony which they had, and did not doubt but God would judge and avenge their blood and sufferings; but they were very desirous to know, *how long it would yet be* until the day of retribution. This desire was not a sinful or malicious affection, for the Greek word *ἐνδικαίειν*, signifies, to assist an innocent sufferer, by civil process, and to adjudge the guilty. They therefore only petition for the exercise of his right of defence, and retribution in their behalf; or in other words, they wished to know, when the enemies of the Church should be overcome, and the personal kingdom of Christ established on earth. *White robes were given unto every one of them.* This was a token of peculiar favour and promotion, as in the East, priests were invested by white robes with the holy office. They were henceforth employed as minister-

ing spirits, for them who shall be heirs of salvation. Hebrews i. 14.

III. *They should rest yet for a little season.* The holy martyrs, who had been collected under the altar during the first nine general persecutions, expected (perhaps from some sign given in the world of spirits,) the judgments of God on Paganism, and the near approach of the kingdom of Christ. When therefore their number was so greatly enlarged, during the tenth persecution, they expressed their disappointment by a loud and pressing petition, for more light concerning the time of the suffering state of the Church. In this they were fully gratified; but St. John was induced to express this period of time in an obscure manner by the word *chronos*, which signifies a space of time not determined by numbers, but by events. As for instance, the time of a dynasty of a reigning family in a kingdom, or the duration of a republic, or of a war, was by the Grecians called a *chronos*. Hence it follows, that all determinations concerning the length of a *chronos*, are only supposition, which nevertheless may rise to a great degree of probability. I have determined the *chronos* to be 1100 years. For Bengelius and others reject the word μικρόν, *little*, in this place, which is received in our common version; but if it even remains, it would not embarrass my system. For χρόνος μικρός is an expression less indeterminable than even *chronos*, and may denote any time between 900 and 1000 years, though it cannot signify more, or less, without interfering with other numbers. The Revelation speaks of four bloody persecutions against the saints, three of which already stand recorded on the page of history. That of Pagan Rome during the first centuries—that by Papal Rome against the *Waldenses* and *Albigenses* A. D. 1208 and 1209—that against the *Hussites* in Bohemia, and the *Protestants* in Europe—and that by the beast out of the earth, and by the beast from the bottomless pit; which last is not here

considered, as it occurs during the time of the last judgments. If now we retain the reading: *a little chronos*: that is, less than a chronos, we have 906 years from the commencement of the tenth persecution A. D. 303, when those souls began their exclamation under the altar, to the time of the Papal crusades against the Waldenses A. D. 1209. But if we adopt the reading "*a chronos*," and calculate from the end of the first persecution, 314, we have the commencement of the third A. D. 1414, when those eminent men of God, *John Huss*, and *Jerome of Prague*, were burnt alive by the council of *Constance*, and all their followers persecuted with savage barbarity, by the emperor *Sigismund* and the Papal clergy, for many years. The text even seems to favour the opinion of an allusion to two periods of persecution, and denominates the martyrs of the first Waldenses and Albigenses, "*fellow servants*" of the ancient martyrs, and those of the second period, since the time of John Huss, only "*brethren*." Now the time of the first persecution from A. D. 64—to the year 314, is 250 years. If we add these to 1414, we have 1664, precisely the time when the persecutions against the Protestants ceased, and the *Evangelic doctrine* was again legally established in Germany.

This seal does not discover any direct judgment on the Roman empire; but history informs us, what a great effect the blood and sufferings of the martyrs had on the Pagan spectators, and on Paganism, in facilitating their conversion. Yet the united voice of all the martyrs requiring vengeance, may well be considered as a powerful cause of the downfall, and utter ruin of Heathenism in the Roman dominions.



## VI. SEAL ACCOMPLISHED FROM A. D. 322—TO 372.

Verse 12. And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood:

13. And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig-tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind:

14. And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places:

15. And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bond-man, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens, and in the rocks of the mountains;

16. And said to the mountains and rocks, fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb:

17. For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?

It is customary in prophetic writings, to announce the final doom of nations, of governments, and of religious communities by images and expressions, which in their literal sense can only take place on the last day of judgment, and at the destruction of the world. See Isa. xiii. 9. 10. 13. 17. 19. and xxxiv. 4. 5. Hagg. ii. 21. 22. Joel ii. 10. Ezek. xxxii. 7. 8. Math. xxiv. 7. 29. Luke xxi. 25. 26. Heb. xii. 26. 27. The reason is, because these nations, governments and communities, are then precisely found in that state of corruption, into which the whole world will be sunk at the last day of final retribution. The eternal mind is then thus disposed towards their existence, as He will be on the last day, in regard to the continuance of

mankind on this earth. When such a catastrophe takes place, the day of grace seems to be over for foolish virgins, and the door of heaven shut against the wicked. Rev. xxii. 11.

By this terribly majestic description, the Lord informs his Church of the total overthrow of Paganism in the Roman empire, both as to its religion and civil power; which was begun during the period of this seal, by the conversion of the Roman emperor *Constantine* the Great, and its final doom perfectly fixed in the year 372.

This *earthquake* signifies a great civil commotion in the Roman empire; *heaven*, Paganism; the *sun*, the Heathenish doctrine of religion; the *moon*, their worship and idolatry; the *stars*, their priests; the *earth*, their civil polity; *mountains* and *islands*, the larger and inferior divisions of the empire; *dens* and *rocks*, those places, into which the gospel of Christ had not yet penetrated, and which served as places of refuge, concealment, and protection.

The sun and fountain-head of all their religious light and knowledge became black, which is a sign of mourning, perplexity, and consternation. Joel ii. 10. It darkened at the dawn of gospel day, and lost all power further to illuminate, even in the eyes of reason. Their idolatrous worship appeared an unreasonable fraud and deception, and the Heathens changed their assemblies, and festival days, into councils of blood and revenge against the Christians. Their priests, magicians, and vestals, lost all their honour, excellence, and support, and sunk down to the common multitude. Chr. i 20, Dan. viii. 10. Paganism, which had been the universal religion of the empire, like the expanse or firmament, departed as a scroll when it is rolled together. For *Constantine* prohibited its worship, and turned the Heathen temples into Christian churches. The mountains and islands were moved; for the different emperors carried on great wars against one another, and made new divisions in the empire between themselves, and

in the provinces. All the supporters of Paganism, from the throne to the cottage, withdrew after that total overthrow of *Licinius* by *Constantine*, in which the first is said to have lost 100,000 men; and the idolaters began to dread the wrath of the worshippers of the Lamb, whom they had persecuted so cruelly. They were dismissed from the offices of the state, and in the Roman armies. *Maxentius* fled from *Constantine*, and perished in the river Tiber; *Dioclesian* poisoned himself; *Licinius* was put to death, after having lurked about in fields and villages, under a sense of the wrath of the Lamb in his conscience, which was the case with many thousands in those days. The conversion of *Constantine* the Great, was undoubtedly the most fatal blow Paganism ever received, and the emperor *Theodosius* nearly affected its total abolition. From this period it gradually declined, and the Church of Christ rose, arrayed in heavenly splendour.

Historians testify, that on the day of the great victory of *Constantine* over *Licinius*, the sun was eclipsed, and the stars shone for four hours, and the moon appeared like blood. Thus the Lord intimated this great change on earth by signs in the firmament, in order to excite the attention of men to his marvellous deeds.

It has been often remarked by able divines, who were critically acquainted with the Roman history during the period now under consideration, that the defeat and ruin of Paganism was neither so rapid, nor so generally marked with such poignant and alarming sensations in the minds and conduct of the Heathens, as the strong and glaring images under this seal would lead us to suppose. In answer to this objection it has been observed, that these are figurative terms, customary in prophetic writings, which must not be taken in a literal sense, nor extended beyond the limits of what they usually signify in other parts of the Scriptures. But this solution is not fully satisfactory in this place. When I consider this seal in all its

bearings to the whole prophecy, it appears to me, that those eminent men have not formed to themselves a competent conception of the majesty and vast import of this book, which certainly comprehends both the visible and invisible world, and many of its prophecies reach from one into the other, just as the events are produced by invisible first causes. Paganism in the Roman empire under this catastrophe, is an emblem of the infernal regions; and the hieroglyphics under this seal, express a final doom, begun on earth in an empire, which for many years had been the throne and residence of Satan, and ended by such an actual representation of the last day of judgment among the damned in hell. The learned and pious Bengelius is of this opinion, as also Dr. Yung; and the context strongly requires such an explanation. For the fifth seal opens a scene in the invisible world, where we behold the state of the holy martyrs; and in the following chapter, we are shown a great multitude of saints and angels in heaven. If, therefore, the unhappy dead are not also intended in this place, they would not be mentioned at all. And yet it is acknowledged, that the seven seals comprise the whole creation. The holy martyrs were promoted to a higher state of felicity, and no doubt, the unhappy dead have been hereby placed into a more painful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. Heb. x. 27. 31. ix. 27. Math. viii. 29.

Thus the great mystery was solved, and the Christians now knew, which of the two principal religions in the Roman empire would at last prevail. The Lion of Juda had overcome *Judaism*, and now by a second victory laid even the *throne and residence* of Satan under his feet.



## CHAPTER VII.

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### TWO VISIONS AS PREPARATORY TO THE SEVENTH SEAL.

This chapter contains two visions, expressive of the security of saints in all ages ; which should both be considered as preparatory to the opening of the seventh seal, or to its contents under the sound of the seven trumpets. First, four angels make their appearance, as instruments of God's wrath against the vices and corruptions in Christendom, which, since the emperor *Constantine* had given the Church peace, tranquility, riches and honour, soon rose to such a daring height, as to eclipse the spirit and lustre of genuine Christianity. Against these dangerous innovations, and succeeding judgments, the people of God were sealed to the number of 144,000. After which the holy apostle had another vision of a numberless multitude of saints, and of an innumerable company of angels, worshipping before the throne of God and the Lamb, in profound submission and reverence.

Verse 1. And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree.

2. And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God : and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to

whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea,

3. Saying, hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.

I have remarked in my preliminary observations, that the language of St. John in this book of prophecy is not Athenian, but in a great measure only the vehicle of oriental ideas. Here, perhaps, is a most suitable place, to produce a strong proof in favour of that assertion.

So obvious is this truth in the hieroglyphic language of Daniel and the Apocalypse, that our *would-be* philosophers, and modern infidels have united to assert, that our Scripture doctrine concerning angels was originally derived from Chaldea. These gentlemen have often told falsehoods, sometimes from ignorance, and more frequently against their better knowledge, in order to undermine the word of life, in favour of their own vicious desires. But in this instance, the resemblance of Scripture emblems to the religious tenets of the Chaldeans, has in justice struck them with conviction, though their conclusion is fallacious and only true in part. It is true that both the Chaldean and Persian Magi taught a doctrine concerning good and bad angels, as a part of their wisdom, similar to our Scripture doctrine, even as early as the days of Daniel, of which the numerous litanies of the Zend Avesta, or Persian Bible, contain ample testimony. And it is also true, that the inspired penmen in their style of writing, have adopted those commonly received and understood opinions in their days, as emblems, to express the profound and hidden mysteries of God to man. But will it follow from hence, that because this doctrine has been believed among the ancients, and corrupted by the Persian Magi, that it is therefore false, and the philosophic dreams of moderns true? The ancient reformers of philosophy, religion, and politics, have been men of great minds, who have even

erred with honour; which is by no means the case with modern infidels.

No doubt, our first parents were acquainted with the existence of angels, from whom they received many useful lessons, and much necessary information while yet in paradise. And I also know no reason, why these heavenly messengers should not have had as much intercourse with the holy patriarchs before the flood, as we surely know, they have had with the men of God after the deluge, although it is not expressly mentioned in Scripture. These traditions, accompanied at times by actual experience, are no doubt the fountain-head of all the Heathen mythologies, and demonologies, in which they now appear so much distorted, and garbed in vile superstition, and gross ignorance. Chaldea seems to have been the mother of Sabiism, h. e. the worship of the host of heaven, and the tutress of this gross idolatry among other nations. They imagined the sun to be the visible body of the Deity, and maintained that the moon, the planets, and the fixed stars, were animated and governed by angels, or superior intelligences, as the body of man by a living soul. The Sabian Magi appear to have had few conceptions of an intellectual world, beyond these heavenly luminaries, when *Zoroaster* arose in *Urmi*, and reformed *Sabiism* among the Medes and Persians, by his religious philosophy of light and fire. He taught them, that the host of heaven were only emblems of the Deity and his angels, over which they presided as governors, and opened a view before them into an invisible world, where all these intelligent beings appeared in their primeval excellence and glory. However, according to his tenets, they also had many employments on earth, where they superintend the four elements, and seasons, empires, kingdoms, nations, oceans, rivers, men, and the affairs of men. In the exercise of these offices they were often opposed by the *dews* and *daroudjs*, i. e. demons, who, according to his philosophy, had been the first inhabitants of this

earth, and whom God conquered by the stars and angels in a general deluge, because they polluted the elements. These evil spirits inhabit darkness, the atmosphere, and solitary places, from whence they oppose all the benevolent designs of good angels towards men, whom they hate and seek to destroy. Zend Avesta T. iii. p. 358. 359. Also see Herder's *Erläuterungen zum N. T.*

Verse 1. *Four angels, holding the four winds of the earth.* These are evil angels, for they hurt with *injustice*, as the original *ἀδικειν*, verse 2. signifies. They are instruments of God's wrath under the four first trumpets in the next chapter. And as the subordinate agents under the three last trumpets are evil angels, viz. the angel of the bottomless pit, the four angels bound at the great river Euphrates, and the great red dragon himself at last, we cannot but consider these in the same light, since they execute judgments of the same nature, and to the identical purposes with the three last. I will not undertake to determine, in how far these angels should be considered symbolical, or to what extent beings from the invisible world may have been employed in the execution of the divine decrees, to bring about such extraordinary phenomena, as those alluded to in this place. There is at least nothing improbable in the opinion, that the Lord may actually permit evil spirits to engage in such dreadful enterprises, so far as they may accord with his wise and providential measures of government, his eternal designs. These angels seem to have held this office as an appointed employment for many years. Jer. xlix. 36. 37. Dan. vii. 2.

The *earth*, on the four corners of which these angels stood, here signifies the continent of the Roman empire; and the *sea*, the sea coast of the Mediterranean: and the *trees*, the princes and principal personages; which will more evidently appear by the explanation of the trumpets. This empire is here considered a plane square, in regard to the four points of heaven, east, west, north and south,



from whence the four winds blow. Dan. viii. 8. xi. 4. Math. xxiv. 31. But these winds are not denominated winds of heaven, they are termed "*winds of the earth;*" which denotes that these angels are not divine messengers, and these winds, storms of calamities and war, by which the Roman empire should greatly suffer, and be utterly rent to pieces.

Verse 2. *Another angel ascending from the East.* This was a holy, but created angel, as is apparent from the language which he holds in the third verse: "*the servants of our God,*" by which he acknowledges himself a subject and worshipper of the Lord. St. John beheld him ascending the horizon from the East, from whence those dreadful calamities, and consequently the sealing of the servants of the Lord, were to commence. He cried with a *loud voice*, because the four angels showed signs of eagerness, to accomplish their bloody work without delay. This shows the provident care of the Lord, and even of holy angels for the Church of Christ, during the approaching trials and dangers. She would not have been able to sustain the storm in her present state, having lost much of her former spirit of faith, love and fidelity, during her late prosperity; wherefore this mighty angel was sent to strengthen and prepare her for this time of great peril.

Verse 4. And I heard the number of them which were sealed. *And there were* sealed a hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel.

5. Of the tribe of Juda *were* sealed twelve thousand.  
Of the tribe of Reuben *were* sealed twelve thousand.

- Of the tribe of Gad *were* sealed twelve thousand.
6. Of the tribe of Aser *were* sealed twelve thousand.  
Of the tribe of Naphtalim *were* sealed twelve thousand.

Of the tribe of Manasses *were* sealed twelve thousand.

7. Of the tribe of Simeon *were* sealed twelve thousand.

Of the tribe of Levi *were* sealed twelve thousand.

Of the tribe of Isachar *were* sealed twelve thousand.

8. Of the tribe of Zebulon *were* sealed twelve thousand.

Of the the tribe of Joseph *were* sealed twelve thousand.

Of the tribe of Benjamin *were* sealed twelve thousand.

The sealing angel had the seal of the living God, and in the execution of his commission many assistants, of whom he speaks verse third, in the plural number. Under what symbol this *seal* appeared in the vision to St. John, is not mentioned; but it was impressed on none, except the servants of God, on true believers already advanced in holiness. It was said, that Frederick the Great, king of Prussia, bore the hieroglyphic of a king in his physiognomy. And there is no doubt, the tranquil, serene and heavenly mind of a sanctified child of God, will also impress itself on his countenance, by which others are warned: *take heed, that thou speak kindly to Jacob.* Gen. xxxi.

23. But the sealing in this place is of far greater importance. It was an unction from above, by which the members of the Church of Christ received self-subsistence, firmness invincible under the trials to come, and an invisible safeguard for bodily security, amidst all the calamities of the empire under the following trumpets. As anciently there was a mark upon the houses of the Israelites, in consequence of which the destroying angel passed by, Exod. xii. 7. 13; and upon the foreheads of those that sighed and cried in Jerusalem, Ezek. ix. 4; so were these servants of God, in a particular manner, convinced of their

state of grace and adoption, and of their safety in the chamber of his protection, till the days of indignation should pass over, and the glorious Millennium begin. 2 Cor. iii. 3. 2 Tim. ii. 19.

Verse 4. *Of all the tribes of Israel.* This cannot mean Israel after the flesh, but the true Israel of God, the children of the promise, the Church of Jesus Christ, where all distinction of tribes has ceased, Gal. iii. 28, and every believer is accounted an Israelite. Rom. ix. 6. 8. This passage does not treat of the protection of the Jews, but the preservation of the Church. She is represented by the twelve tribes of Israel, in order to show that she has been accepted in their place, and may apply all the promises of scripture to her comfort, as being grafted into the first stock. Rom. xi.

By the number 144,000, these servants of God are represented as the true Church of Christ. This is a square number consisting of twelve, in allusion to the members of the Church of the Old Testament, who were the true and genuine offspring of the twelve patriarchs; and to the Church of the New Testament, of the offspring of the twelve apostles. It also is the number of New Jerusalem: The Church of Christ is expressed by this number here, because *at that very time*, all those *heads of families* had been brought into her bosom, which constituted the *genuine lineage* of the old dispensation, and *such* of the Church of Christ, as by their posterity will reach the gates of New Jerusalem. This you may call mercy unto thousands on them that love him. Exod. xxxiv. 7.

Verse 9. After this I beheld, and lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands;

10. And cried with a loud voice, saying, salvation to our God, which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.

11. And all the angels stood round about the throne, and *about* the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God,
12. Saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, *be* unto our God for ever and ever. Amen.

This vision is distinct from the preceding one, and yet closely connected in subject, matter, and design. The former comprehends the lineage of the twelve tribes, as incorporated with the Church of Christ, and comforts the servants of the Lamb, by a lively representation of the provident care of God for the security and enlargement of the Church during the following times of great peril, and Romish apostacy. Here St. John beheld an innumerable multitude of saints in heaven, from all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, among which were all the children of God under the Old Testament, in order to animate their drooping spirits under the approaching calamities of the trumpets. Their being *clothed in white robes*, denotes their characters and employments at present, and during the Millennium: as it was usual for princes and priests to be arrayed in such garments, when in the exercise of their offices. Rev. i. 6. v. 10. They had *palms in their hands*, which were emblems of victory and triumph among the ancients, as also tokens of great joy at solemn festivals among the Jews. Lev. xxiii. 40. They had vanquished Satan, sin and death, and now commemorated the wonders of his love in the following verse, by which they had been preserved, and brought hither. In this they were joined and assisted by *all* the angels in heaven, who had been ministering spirits to them, while yet in the wilderness of this world, and now enjoyed the unspeakable pleasure, of seeing all their labours crowned with immortal honour. Heb. i. 14. Yet in humility, they ascribe all to



the Lord, who enabled them to accomplish so important a work.

Verse 13. And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, what are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?

14. And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, these are they, which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

15. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.

16. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat.

17. For the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.

Verse 13. *And one of the elders answered.* Ἀποκρίνομαι, does not only signify to answer, but often, to *begin a discourse*, to *address a person*, and thus it ought to be rendered here. The angel addressed St. John, in order to give him more information concerning this multitude of saints, for the comfort of the Church, and himself under his present sufferings.

This innumerable company of saints before the throne of God and the Lamb, were not the holy martyrs. For all the martyrs from the beginning of the world to that time, would not amount to such a great multitude, as St. John here beheld. Beside this, *their* lot has been determined under the fifth seal, as that of the unhappy dead under the sixth; so that we cannot expect to meet with them so soon again. Nevertheless, the elder describes them as hav-

ing come out of great tribulation, by which we may understand the afflictions, reproaches and persecutions of the saints, which they suffered as *confessors*, and faithful followers of Christ, for his name's sake, and the many trials and temptations in working out their own salvation with fear and trembling, which the children of God have experienced in all ages. Their *robes* may denote the whole Christian life and conversation, even their most holy actions; which are all imperfect, and not acceptable in themselves before God; wherefore they are said to have washed them, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. These two words, *to wash*, and *to make white*, refer to two distinct actions. By being washed in the blood of Christ, we are cleansed from the filth of sin, which refers to justification; and by being whitened or bleached, our imperfections are done away, and we are adorned by the righteousness of Jesus Christ, which denotes sanctification through his spirit. Both acts are here ascribed to the saints, because of their concern, faith, and trust in the use of the means, in order to enter the kingdom of God. There is, however, a considerable difference between their robes and those of the elders, according to the original. They only had *stolæ*, gowns, but the elders *white raiment*, which may denote a higher degree both of sanctification and preferment.

This innumerable multitude then, is the general assembly of all the spirits of just men made perfect, in all ages of the world. For it is worthy of remark, that the words in the original, verse 14, *οἱ ἐρχόμενοι*, should not be rendered, "which came," but, "*those coming*," so as also to comprehend those which follow, until the second advent of Christ. After this general description of their character, the elder proceeds to inform the apostle of their future reward and employment. I say designedly, their *future* reward. For, that degree of felicity which they now enjoyed, St. John had beheld, and described in the preceding

verses; and the attentive reader of the original will observe, that in the fifteenth verse, the tense suddenly changes, and runs on in the *future* to the end of the chapter. The elder therefore informs St. John in these last verses, of a yet higher degree of happiness and employment, to which these saints would be promoted at a more distant period, namely, in the time of the Millennium, or during the personal kingdom of Christ on earth. A series of important events is carried on in the church militant, but a still more momentous train above, in the Church triumphant; of which we here now and then meet with a faint glance in this prophecy.

It is said of their present state of happiness: *They are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple*, in allusion to the priests and Levites, whose service in the temple was constant and uninterrupted. These words denote their present employments, under their great high-priest in the Church of Christ, in which they are engaged on earth among the heirs of eternal salvation, though invisible to our view. *Ease and rest* is incompatible with felicity in heaven, where all is life and activity for the happiness of all, and where the degrees of glory consist in preferments to stations, in which most good can be done.

But now the tense changes, and the elder describes their future happiness in these remarkable words: *And He that sitteth (now) on the throne shall (then) dwell among them*. Here a future promotion to a still higher station of felicity, than what they at present enjoy, is evident beyond contradiction. It is no less obvious, that this degree of glory will consist in a more immediate enjoyment of his beatific presence, and such an intimate communion with him, as they had never before experienced. But its points of distinction from other states of felicity, must be learned by a more close inspection of the words of the text. Σκηνώ, ὡς, to dwell, to reside in tents, is never used to signify an immutable continuance of a state of things. Its precise

meaning is, *to sojourn under a visible cover*, formed for the purpose of dwelling in for a time; as the Israelites dwelled in tents, the soul of man in a body, and God in a temple, 2 Cor. v. 1. 4. 2 Pet. i. 13, 14. Acts vii. 46. Rev. xxi. 3. Thus it is said, our Saviour ἐσκήνωσε, dwelled in a tent among us, after the Word was made flesh. John i. 14. This phrase seems to denote more than his *spiritual presence* with his saints, and yet not the same state of happiness, which they now enjoy. It indicates *the glorious reign of Christ with his saints on earth*, when their felicity will be increased by a personal intercourse with their mortal brethren, and Christ shall dwell with them, in a visible pavilion, as king of all, and in all his personal glory. During this thousand year's reign, the Lord will complete another marvellous enterprise on earth, which even angels and saints will desire to look into. 1 Pet. i. 12. *They shall hunger no more, nor thirst any more*, for natural or spiritual things; neither shall the sun of trial and affliction light on them, nor any heat of toil, or spiritual labour. Isa. iv. 5. 6. Ps. xci. 1. cxxi. 6. Isa. xlix. 10. xxv. 8. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne, *shall feed them* with the rich discoveries of himself, as signified by a feast, by new wine in his Father's kingdom, by eating and drinking at his table, where they shall be sweetly and fully satiated and refreshed for ever. Saints and angels will be *living fountains of water* to each other, and to men, their brethren. John viii. 38. Thus the Lamb, their king ποιμανεῖ, *shall rule them*, (*reget illos*, as the Vulgate version reads) and in the midst of his ancients gloriously a thousand years, to wipe away all tears from their eyes.

There is no intimation of any separate time annexed to these two visions, and it would be highly improper, to add a time to any prediction in this book without being authorized thereto by the text. For the internal order and method of the Revelation, is a singular masterpiece among



the prophecies of Scripture, and like a stately edifice, perfectly symmetrical in all its parts, where nothing is left to be added, by the ingenuity of man. The expositor who follows this order, will soon find, that the Lord thereby intended to assist him in the discovery of truth; and he who neglects it, must inevitably work himself into a labyrinth of his own inventions. These two visions may therefore be considered either as a continuation of the sixth seal, or, as I prèsume, an introduction to the seventh; though both take up a period of time, running collateral with the main column of this admirable system.

The Lamb has opened *seven* seals, and not eight, or twelve; which number, no doubt, has its secret and important signification in the counsels of heaven. Here it is the *key-number*, to determine the periods of the seals, and of the trumpets. They each comprise a *jubilee-year*, or *seven weeks of years*, except where the periods are extended by annexed *extraordinary numbers*, as I have shown in the *Introduction*. But the seventh seal comprises a period of seven jubilee-years, divided into seven equal portions of time, by the seven trumpets. We will now proceed, and see how strongly this is proved, and verified by history. Completion, no doubt, is a solution of the problems of these numbers, which must silence infidelity, and confirm for ever our faith in the word of God.

## CHAPTER VIII.

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### VII. SEAL, ACCOMPLISHED FROM A. D. 372.

**Verse 1.** And when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour.

**2.** And I saw the seven angels which stood before God ; and to them were given seven trumpets.

This chapter opens a new scene of events, attended with circumstances peculiarly majestic, and of portentous import. Hitherto, every creature around the throne of God had been in motion, and heaven resounded the harmony of the celestial choirs, to the praise of the Lamb, for the execution of the judgments under the former seals, by which the utter ruin of Paganism had been completed in the Roman empire. But now when the Lamb broke the seventh seal, all heaven stood in profound silence, as if struck with astonishment and awe, at the disclosure of a new train of momentous measures against the Church of Christ herself, because of her degeneracy and corruption during her late prosperity. This solemn silence is only mentioned in this place. Heaven paused in deep contemplation, as feeling materially interested, and largely participating in the future sorrows of the Church. Ps. xli. 10. Be still, and know that I am God ; I will be exalted in the earth. This sudden cessation has an immediate reference to the seven trumpets, and indicates the important contents of the seventh seal, to which it raises the anticipation of attentive

readers. It cannot refer merely to the angel offering incense at the altar, while the people, according to ancient custom, were in silent prayer without; for St. John always puts his *μετα ταυτα*, *after these things*, when he passes from one vision to another, which he has not done in this place. Though this appears to be the most natural meaning of this silence in heaven, it may nevertheless also refer to the tranquil state of the Church under the emperor Theodosius. And in this case *heaven* would denote the Church of Christ on earth, and *half an hour*, simply an indeterminate space of time, as in John iv. 21. 23.

Thus the seals comprise events in both the visible and invisible world; but the trumpets only refer to the Latin and Greek Churches, in their different states of degeneracy, and to the kingdoms of this world, which are to make room for the personal kingdom of Christ which is to be established during the Millennium.

Verse 2. *And I saw the seven angels.* The ancient Jews believed, that there were at all times seven angels attending around the throne of God, as his prime ministers, and special messengers in the government of the world. Job xii. 15. Zoroaster in his Zend-Avesta considers them, as the chief of all created beings, perfect images of God, kings immediately under him, generals against the powers of *Ahriman* or Satan, and in continual activity for the good of the whole kingdom of God. Their combatants and associates are the principalities, the powers, and all the mighty ones of heaven, with whom they constitute one state, one kingdom, and one people of the most High.\* This also appears to have been the doctrine of the latter prophets, of the apostles of our Lord, Eph. ii. 21. Col. ii. 10. and a fundamental idea in the whole *κοσμος νοητος*, or Alexandrian philosophy. The passage before us affords new evidence of the truth of this doctrine. And in imitation of these angels, the Eastern monarchs chose seven

\* See Erläuterungen zum N. T. 1 B. p. 29.

princes, as the principal personages of the empire, whose employment was a continual attendance at the throne, Esther i. 14. As these seven angels are to be considered the chief rulers in heaven, their introduction in this place denotes a general interference of all the celestial powers, in the execution of the Divine decrees under the trumpets. How great must be the interest at stake, how mighty and complicated the power and scheme of the enemy, when such exertions are made on the part of Heaven !

*To them were given seven trumpets.* See Rev. i. 10. The most ancient use of trumpets in communities among the Asiatics, is that of wandering nations, or migrating hordes, at shifting their habitations in search of fresh pasture ; on which occasions, the most valient chief at the head of the whole train, blew a trumpet during the whole march. This custom is yet observed among the Kalmucs, and other Eastern hordes to the present day, when they roam about from place to place with their cattle. But it also was of general use as an instrument of war, both to an army in march, and to proclaim battle and victory. The Hebrews used trumpets to proclaim solemn festivals. But they cannot be considered in this sense here, where they no doubt, refer to that memorable invasion of the Roman empire, by so many German and Asiatic nations, after the death of Theodosius ; and to those wars, desolations, and calamities, which Heathen nations, in times after this catastrophe, have brought on Christian countries, and on the Church. Jer. iv. 19. Hos. v. 8. Those expositors who connect these trumpets with the following angel at the altar, in allusion to the Jewish priests, blowing trumpets at the offering of incense, have not considered, that they were *only given* to the angels here, and *not blown* on this occasion. St. John makes a parenthesis in the text, when he passes on to the angel at the altar, whose offer of incense he only considers a collateral circumstance to the blowing of the trumpets, and not *vice versa*.



Verse 3. And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne.

4. And the smoke of the incense, *which came* with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand.

5. And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth: and there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake.

Verse 3. *And another angel came.* The Revelation opens a stupendous view into the world of spirits. Here we see heaven and earth engaged, to accomplish the will of the Almighty ruler of the Universe. No book of Scripture makes such numerous recitations of angels as this; and the correct meaning of this word is in many passages all-important, and yet difficult to find. Dr. Gill, for instance, has taken this angel to be our Lord Jesus Christ, and others have here understood the Holy Ghost. They fell into the same mistake with John himself, Rev. xix. 10. who began to worship an angel, which had told and shown him such glorious things. But the Holy Ghost is never called an angel in the Scriptures. Christ is sometimes denominated an angel in the Old Testament, because of his then future embassy into the world; but never in the New Testament, where he sends his angel. Rev. i. 1. xxii. 16. and is himself the Lord, whose second Advent is prepared by all these measures. The angel here with the golden censer is termed "*another angel*," by which words he is compared to the former seven, as to his person, and yet distinguished from them as to his office and employment. This is also proved by the circumstances of his *standing* at the altar, of the incense having been *given* him, and from the whole aspect of his ministration.

*Much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints.* This is an unhappy translation, which very much favours the prevalent opinion of former times, concerning the mediation of angels in support of the saints. *ἵνα δώσῃ* should have been translated, *that he should give, or lay it to the prayers of all saints, and not, that he should offer it with them*; for the word *offer*, is not found in the original. The performance of this angel here, is an *angelic function*, and not a *priestly employment*; but rather the archetype of that sacred office, which Moses beheld on the Mount. These prayers *had been* placed upon the altar, before the angel came to it, and received the incense. He did not lay the incense into the censer, but united it with the prayers of the saints upon the golden altar, where it was kindled by the holy fire of eternal love, as blazing forth in the intercession of Christ. Burning incense is an emblem, not of the prayers themselves, but of their being very grateful, and acceptable to God. Ps. cxli. 2.

The true import of this passage seems to be, that, some time before the blowing of the trumpets, *all the saints on earth* lamented the degeneracy and corruption of the Church, and made many efforts by prayer for her revival, but for a time without any visible signs of success. Thus the prayers of all saints were brought upon the golden altar in heaven, which, at least in this place, is not locally different from the true Church of Christ. *Incense* here denotes, both those heavenly graces in praying saints, by which alone their prayers are made acceptable, and of effect before God, as also that glorious consciousness of faith, in which believers rejoice, know and experience, that their prayers are accepted. Now, so degenerate was the Church at that time—so much in want of the life and spirit of true Christianity, that, in prayers which regarded the whole Church, even the wise virgins of those days slumbered, and for a time were in want of incense, until

this ministering angel, who had received those heavenly graces for that purpose, revived and animated them anew, to a more exalted state of faith and love. Thus did the smoke of the incense ascend, with the prayers of the saints, out of the angels hand up before God.

Verse 5. *And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar.* Two altars are mentioned in this vision; the *golden altar of incense*, and the altar of burnt-offering, here merely denominated the *altar*. The altar of incense under the old dispensation was the place, where *men* entreated God for favour and acceptance, *Exod. xxx. 1. 3. 6.* but the altar of burnt-offering was the place, where *God* required Divine justice to be executed, against the transgression of his law. *Exod. xxvii.* This was done typically by offering sacrifices during the time of the Old Testament, and in reality, by the sufferings and atonement of Christ for the sins of the world. From the archetype of this altar of burnt-offering, or theatre of Divine justice against a guilty world, the angel took fire in consequence of the prayers of the saints, by which are meant the judgments and the wrath of God against his enemies, and upon the transgressors of his will.

*Cast it into the earth: and there were voices, and thundings, and lightnings, and an earthquake.* The earth here denotes the Roman empire, now become Christian, and the earthly minded nations in the neighbouring countries. Thunder, lightning and earthquake are commotions of nature, which according to history, always precede the sore judgments of God; but here they are figurative expressions of great import, by which the prayers of the saints were answered, and certain measures of Divine justice signified to the Church. By *voices*, are meant those ministers of the Word, who rose up at this time, inspired with extraordinary zeal and fervour to enlighten the minds, and alarm the consciences of the people, by promulgating the future terrors, and righteous judgments of

the Lord upon the land. This in many places occasioned a revival of religion, as is generally the case, when great calamities are to follow. *Thunderings* signify the judgments of God, actually inflicted by ways of Providence, which, when seen or heard of, stun the ears, and terrify the hearts of the guilty. *Lightnings* are the prognostic signs of these judgments at a short distance, by means of which flashes of Divine justice reach the consciences of sinners, in order to turn them to repentance. And *earth-quakes* have ever been looked upon, as emblems of civil commotions, among the nations of the world. This *earth-quake* in particular, denotes the commencement of those remarkable revolutions, of which I shall give an account under the next verse.

Verse 6. And the seven angels, which had the seven trumpets, prepared themselves to sound.

In order perfectly to comprehend this new scene of events, which is indicated by the blowing of the trumpets, I presume it necessary, to make a historical introduction, which I have reserved for this place, where, according to this series of prophecy, the judgments of God are in full approach upon the house of God, 1 Pet. iv. 17. and the whole Roman empire. To reason from history, these judgments nearly all proceeded, in a great measure, from the same fountain-head—from the tremendous commotion which ensued in Asia and Europe, upon the commencement of that great migration of Asiatic and German nations, armies, hordes and tribes; who by numerous invasions shook the Roman empire to its centre, rent the Western part of it to pieces, and divided it among themselves.

This remarkable migration of the barbarians at that time, was an extraordinary occurrence, of which the world has not beheld the equal to this day. Gibbon, Mosheim, and other historians, account for this sudden tempest of nations, in the following manner. A nation of *Tartars*, in the north-eastern parts of China, under their victorious



monarch *Toulein*, vanquished, and expelled the nation of the *Huns* from their country to the north of the Caspian sea. This numerous, and no less warlike nation, soon withdrew from the presence of an insulting victor, and, in search of a new home, fell upon the nation of the *Alans*, who inhabited the countries along the river *Tanais*, whom they almost annihilated. Now the barrier of nations in those parts was broken, and, like a violent torrent, they overwhelmed the *Ostrogoths*, and *Visigoths*, one nation after the other, and pressed with incumbent weight into the fertile plains of the *Vistula*; whilst the vanquished nations, who retreated before them, must have been forced on the confines of Germany. The inhabitants of those regions, which the ancients have assigned to the *Suevi*, the *Vandals*, the *Burgundians*, &c. &c. disdaining to be incumbered by these Sarmatian fugitives, abandoned their woods and morasses for the more rich and cultivated provinces of the Roman empire. In this they were soon followed by other nations from Asia, who overthrew one another with precipitation, like the waves of a tempestuous sea, to take their share in the general spoil. This appears to be the most satisfactory account of the origin of that memorable commotion among the nations of the earth, which cost the Church so many tears, and the Roman empire so much blood and treasure. No doubt, in this tremendous scene, the earth has, in a peculiar sense of the word, been a theatre of the powers of darkness, who aimed at nothing short of the total annihilation of the Church of Christ. But when they imagined their victory most complete, the Lord said to this tempestuous sea, hitherto shalt thou come, but no further; and here shall thy proud waves be stayed. Job xxxviii. 11.

Though the first symptoms of these terrible commotions, may be dated from about the year A. D. 250; yet these barbarian nations for many years, approached the Roman empire only from a distance, with fear and awe. When

## I. TRUMPET, FROM A. D. 372—TO 422. 217

they afterwards drew nearer, and attempted to make inroads into the frontier provinces, they were for a long time repulsed with great loss. However, these roaming hordes still continued to take possession of all the adjacent countries, and thus encompassed the empire on every side. And these are the *four winds of the earth*, which were stayed in their progress, till the servants of God had been sealed. Rev. vii. 1. 2. 3. History also assures us, that the Roman empire was not sensibly agitated, or in actual danger of being rent to pieces by these attacks of the barbarians, till after the year A. D. 372, or even after the death of the emperor *Theodosius*.

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### I. TRUMPET ACCOMPLISHED FROM A. D. 372—TO 422.

Verse 7. The first angel sounded, and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth: and the third part of trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up.

This terrible tempest denotes the irruption of the barbarians into the continent of the Roman empire. No figure could have been more suitable and striking, than this storm of hail, fire, and blood, to represent the invasions of these fierce and warlike multitudes, consisting of many tribes, kindreds, and tongues, who all laid in their claim for the common plunder. Isaiah xxviii. 2. ch. xxix. 6. Exod. ix. 23. Heb. vi. 8. This storm of hail was mingled with fire and blood. *Fire*, denotes the incensed, savage fierceness of their dispositions which characterized all their actions in this work of ruin and desolation. *Blood* here designs great slaughter in battle. The *earth* signifies the continent of the Roman empire, and more especially the western parts of it as Germany, France, Spain and Italy, which have been the particular theatres of these scenes of ravage and horror.

History testifies the completion of this trumpet, during the period of time from A. D. 372—to 422. It commenced with the improvident act of the Roman emperor *Valens*, in permitting the *Goths* to pass the *Danube*, and to settle themselves in *Dacia*, *Mæsia*, and *Thrace*. By this impolitic step, he admitted a powerful enemy into the bosom of the empire, which endangered its security, and invited the other Barbarian nations. Soon after this, the *white Huns* invaded *Mesopotamia*, and carried their victorious arms up to the very walls of *Edessa*, whilst the European *Huns* made incursions into the provinces along the *Danube*. In the year 378, the *Goths* in *Thrace* advanced from that province into *Macedon* and *Thessaly*, where they committed dreadful ravages. They afterwards blocked up the city of *Constantinople*, plundered the suburbs, and at last totally defeated and killed the emperor himself. Thus these *Barbarian hordes* daily increased their ranks around the empire; and though the following emperors opposed them with their whole power, the Romans suffered much. They fought most terrible battles, and the advantages gained in the end, were rarely worth the blood of a single soldier.

This was the state of Europe when *Theodosius* died, and divided the empire between his two sons, *Arcadius* and *Honorious*; who both held the reins of government with unsteady hands, and governed by their ministers, who were often unfaithful. Especially *Honorious*, who resided at *Ravenna*, and reigned over the Western provinces, appeared to be little better than an idiot. *Theodosius* died in January A. D. 395, and early in the spring the *Goths* were in arms. The *German* auxiliaries in the Roman armies, declared their independence, went over to their countrymen, and assailed the declining empire with great success. The *Westgoths*, issued forth out of *Pannonia*, and invaded *Greece* and *Italy*. So great was the consternation, that the emperor took refuge in the town of *Ista* in *Piedmont*, where he almost fell a prisoner into the hands of

the victorious *Alaric*. Another German king, *Radagais*, marched an immense army from the northern extremities of Germany, almost to the gates of Rome. It consisted of Vandals, Sueves, Burgundians, Alans and other northern tribes, and is computed, with the accession of women, children and slaves, to 400,000 persons. *Gainas*, another Gothic commander in the Roman service, revolted and turned his arms against the Eastern provinces, and had almost gained the capital of Constantinople.

In 400, the victorious *Alaric* at the head of his warlike Goths, entered Italy again, and took the city of Rome at three different times; which he at last plundered, and reduced many magnificent buildings to ashes. His successor *Ataulph*, pillaged and ravaged the city and country a second time, and then invaded the south of France; where he established a kingdom, which soon extended its limits over all Spain and Portugal. About this time, also the Franks passed the Rhine, and established A. D. 420, a new kingdom in Gaul, under their king *Pharamond*. All these invading armies, took possession of the most fertile, and fairest of all the European provinces; and *Odoacer*, at the head of his Goths and Heruli, conquered *Augustulus*, the last Roman emperor, and thus gave the mortal blow to the imperial dignity in the West.

This tremendous tempest is said to have burnt up the third part of trees, and all green grass on the continent of the Roman empire. *Trees* may denote the principal personages, both civil and ecclesiastical; which is a trope, common with the prophets. Isa. ii. 13. Zech. xi. 1. 2. Isaiah lv. 12. *Grass*, may signify the common people, as being a multitude, in a flourishing condition, though of no power against such an enemy. Job v. 25. Ps. lxxii. 16. Ps. ciii. 15. 1 Pet. i. 24. Isa. xl. 6. 7. There can be no doubt of the great sufferings of all ranks and orders by these calamities, during this period. The higher classes lost their offices, all their possessions in the world, and



one third of them their lives. But the common people are represented by this prophecy, as having fallen altogether, an entire pray to the ravages of these Barbarians, with all their estates; except those who had been sealed, by the seal of the living God. Rev. vii. 3. 4.

The blowing of this trumpet was of import to the Church of Christ; for we may venture to assert, that the Christians were the principal sufferers under these calamities. Though these fierce and warlike nations were for the most part strangers to Christianity, and only intent to acquire wealth and dominion, yet they were often excited by the Pagans, who still remained in the empire, to treat the followers of Christ with inexpressible cruelty and violence. However, their expectations were finally disappointed. The eternal sun of righteousness illuminated the hearts of these usurpers; they at last embraced Christianity, and resigned their sceptres to the Lord.



## II. TRUMPET ACCOMPLISHED FROM A. D. 422—TO 472.

Verse 8. And the second angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire, was cast into the sea; and the third part of the sea became blood:

9. And the third part of the creatures which were in the sea, and had life, died; and the third part of the ships were destroyed.

This trumpet must be explained in connexion with the first, as being of the same nature, and having the Roman empire for its object; and yet as sufficiently distinguished, in regard to time and place. Hence it cannot refer to the Macedonian heresy, nor to the taking and sacking of Rome, by the victorious *Alaric*, at the head of his fierce

and warlike Goths, as Dr. Gill, and other expositors have explained. The *sea* here denotes, the countries on the sea coast of the Mediterranean; and the *burning mountain*, that terrible invasion of Africa, by the Vandals and Alans under their king *Genserick*, who during this period, desolated all those countries with fire and sword, in a most cruel and savage manner. This mountain was *cast*; that is, it came from another region, and fell with sudden violence on this devoted third part of the Roman empire, which had hitherto escaped the calamities of the first trumpet.

During the accomplishment of the prophecy under this trumpet, the Christian Church in Africa was almost crushed by violence, and the cruel oppression of her enemies. *Genserick*, that savage and inhuman tyrant, set sail from Spain A. D. 427, at the head of 80,000 Vandals, and invaded *Africa* by the treachery of Bonifacius, the Roman governor, who had been offended by his Court. This fierce people had no sooner arrived, than they carried on a most dreadful war of desolation and plunder against the inhabitants for twelve years, took the province out of the hands of the Romans, and established a kingdom for themselves, which continued a whole century. *Genserick* himself was a monster of cruelty, and his *Vandals* without mercy. They committed inexpressible cruelties, without remorse, during a period of fifty years, in which they waged a continual war of carnage and rapine, against the Romans on the European sea coast, and the islands in the Mediterranean; which is said, by *Procopius*, an author of those days, to have almost depopulated Africa, and to have cost five millions of souls. Their known savage cruelty, and the glory of a number of victories which they gained in rapid succession, almost disarmed the power of the Romans. They conquered Hippo A. D. 437, Carthage A. D. 439, and in a few years the islands of

Sicily, Sardinia, Corsica, Eberjus and Majorca. A. D. 455, they invaded Italy with an army of 300,000 men, and far surpassed the West Goths in their terrible cruelties. They pillaged Naples, Capua, and many other cities and towns on the continent; and their fleet ravaged every place within its reach on the sea coast. Rome, which had submitted to their victorious arms, lost all its treasures, and not even retaining its ornaments, which other Barbarians had as yet permitted it to enjoy.

The *Vandals*, for the most part, were *Arians*. Amidst their constant wars, they also carried on a bloody persecution against the Catholics, who professed their adherence to the *Nicene* doctrine, concerning the divinity of Christ. *Genserick* and his son *Hunerick* in particular, razed their churches, exiled their bishops, and tormented by the most violent methods, such as remained inflexible against their wicked importunities. They even exceeded, if possible, Pagan Rome, in injustice, and devising various means of torture; under which many thousands were either maimed in their bodies, or honoured the Lord by martyrdom.

The whole nation is here compared to a burning mountain, consuming itself, and every combustible matter in contact with it. By this figure are indicated their rage, fury, and savage cruelties in all their invasions of the Roman empire; and the barbarous persecutions, which they carried on against the Catholics in their own country. The Christian Churches in Africa, under the government of the *Vandals*, truly dwelled, as it were in contact with a consuming fire. For, we are informed by credible historians, that before their invasion of that country, they counted seven hundred bishoprics in it, (i. e. congregations, according to the meaning of this word at that time,) which these cruel tyrants almost totally destroyed. Just as the sea would be agitated, if a burning mountain was thrown into its bosom; such was the turbulence and confusion of the ocean of nations along the Mediterranean,

during the time of their incursions. But as the sea would also soon extinguish the fire of such a flaming mountain, so their fury and power was only of short duration.

Thus history furnishes abundance of testimony in completion of this prophecy, for the confirmation of our faith. Those minutely acquainted with the events during this period, will readily consent; that one third part of the inhabitants of Africa, and on the European sea coast of the Mediterranean, died violent deaths by these judgments; and that one third part of the *ships*, or towns, cities, islands and states have been destroyed by these cruel invaders, and in consequence of their incursions. Ezek. xxix. 4. 5.

Some of my readers perhaps, would rather take *Atilla* to be this burning mountain, who is termed the scourge of God, and the dread of the world. He certainly was the most terrible of all men, who at the head of his *Huns*, had nearly desolated the whole earth, and filled it with blood and slaughter; wherefore he might properly have been predicted, under the figure of a burning mountain. But his invasion of the Roman empire, from A. D. 445 to 456, though dreadful beyond expression, does not realize all the features of this prophecy.

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III. TRUMPET ACCOMPLISHED FROM A. D. 472—TO 522.

Verse 10. And the third angel sounded, and there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters;

11. And the name of the star is called wormwood: and the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter.



Nature is by far the most pleasing source of images in all poetry, and the prophets appear to have taken a particular delight, to express the stupendous mysteries of God in her sublime language. The highest objects in the natural world are the sun, moon, and stars; and by these they represent the principal personages either in the world politic, or in the Church. Dan. viii. 10. Isa. xiv. 12. li. 16. xlix. 13. xlv. 23. Math. xxiv. 29. It would by no means accord with all the features of the prophecy under this trumpet, to explain its contents of the world politic, and this star of a king, kingdom, empire, prince, or ruler of the people. In my opinion, this star must signify an eminent doctor, or ruler of the Church, ch. i. 20. Bengelius has here understood *Arius* and his heresy, and Dr. Gill *Pelagius* and the pernicious effects of his heretical doctrines concerning the original corruption of human nature, and the necessity of Divine grace. But this trumpet is too late for Arius, who lived in the reign of Constantine; and the doctrines of Pelagius were suppressed by the eloquent pen of Augustine, and the councils of the Gauls, Britons, and Africans, before they acquired that degree of celebrity, ascribed to this star. Some expositors have understood it of *Origen*; but his reputation has only been considerable among the monastic orders, and his doctrines were attended with no such pernicious effects. Besides, this trumpet must, from its connexion with the general tendency of all these judgments, refer to an event of such a nature, as not only effects the Church, but also the Roman empire: which has only been the case in a small degree, even with Arianism.

This *star* represents the bishop of Rome, in his aspiring efforts to pre-eminence and spiritual supremacy in the Church of Christ; for which the immediate foundations were laid, during this period, according to the concurring testimony of those eminent historians, *Walch* and *Mosheim*. By this ambitious grasp at rank and ecclesiastical

jurisdiction, the Roman pontiff opened a large fountain of corruption among the clergy; prepared the way for the consequent introduction of superstition, and Popery; and commenced those odious and bitter contentions between the patriarchs, which caused so many assassinations and cruel wars, and finally ended in that fatal separation of the Eastern and Western Churches.

I do not mean to assert, that the fall of this great Roman star during this period, consisted in pretensions to a supremacy over the powers of this world; or that he assumed as yet the title of supreme lawgiver and judge of the whole Christian Church, which he claimed in succeeding times. No, his fall consisted in publicly pretending, and strenuously labouring from this time, to establish a *divine right to pre-eminence of rank, office, and power, as a court of appeals among all his brethren, because he was the successor of St. Peter, and vicegerent of Christ on earth.* This ambitious scheme was engendered by the Roman pontiff in the commencement of this period, and acknowledged to that extent in the Western Church before its close, as signified by the prophecy of this trumpet.

Soon after the persecution had ceased, and the Church began to enjoy peace and prosperity under the auspices of the Roman emperors, a great change took place throughout all ranks of Christendom, but especially among the higher orders of the clergy. *Constantine* attached considerable revenues and privileges to all officers in the Church; and when in succeeding time, every congregation became endowed with large funds, they were under the direction and management of the bishops. In consequence of this state of ease and happiness, an evident decline of piety and holiness ensued, and the ministers of the gospel soon lost the former genuine lustre of their office; while some fell into views of self-interest, luxury or indolence, and others made all efforts to create new ranks, and titles of honour and distinction among

themselves for their own aggrandizement. The bishop of Rome had, so early as the third century, obtained a distinguished seat in the Episcopal order; because he was bishop of that ancient metropolis of the empire, and surpassed all his brethren in magnificence, revenues, the number of his ministers, and the size of his diocese. We even meet with encomiums upon that Church in the second century, indicative of peculiar distinction. When therefore, at this time, all ran for the palm of honour, he had already gained a considerable start through the prejudices of the times, and now employed both prudence and craft to establish his pre-eminence, before his competitors should be able to meet him on equal ground.

Hitherto he had only enjoyed a pre-eminence of rank, (from respect for the Church at Rome,) not incompatible with the Christian spirit. But during the period of this trumpet, he pursued a most unchristian train of measures, in order to gain a degree of dignity, power and dominion over his brethren, absolutely inconsistent with the spirit of Christianity, and the final aim of Heaven in the establishment of the Church on earth. Thus fell a star of the first magnitude, from the celestial sphere of the general Church of Christ.

The causes by which the bishop of Rome was induced, thus publicly to pretend a *divine right*, in support of his ambitious scheme for supremacy, were the vigorous efforts of *Acacius*, bishop at Constantinople, towards acquiring a superiority of rank. This prelate had been exalted by the third canon of the council held at Constantinople, A. D. 381—and by the twenty-eighth canon of the council at Chalcedon, A. D. 451, to an equal rank with the patriarchs of *Rome*, *Antioch*, and *Alexandria*, because he was bishop of the imperial city. This was perfectly consistent with the fundamental maxim of Church government at that time, when the rank of bishops was determined, by the rank of the cities where they resided. But now, when

Rome was on the decline, and Constantinople had risen to the summit of eminence, by having become the seat of the empire ; its bishop also rose a formidable rival and check to the growing authority of the Roman patriarch. Simplicius, who at this time filled the Roman chair, was thereby mortified, and stimulated into vehement measures. His successor, Felix II. interfered in the transactions of the East, the same as he had done, in settling disputes between the clergy, and protecting the bishops against their lawful patriarchs, in order to acquire influence and authority to establish his own supremacy, in which he too well succeeded. Thus elated by pride and zeal, he called a council at Rome, on purpose to excommunicate *Acacius*, bishop of Constantinople, which no one before him had ever ventured to attempt. This arrogant and unwarrantable step, occasioned a schism between the Eastern and Western Churches, which is said to have lasted twenty-five years, but in fact, was never healed until their final separation. *Felix* and his successors prosecuted their ambitious plan with such vehemence and obstinacy, that the Eastern bishops at last consented, and erased *Acacius's* name from their sacred register, covered with eternal disgrace. Thus the Roman pontiff gave a deadly wound to the pre-eminence of the patriarch of Constantinople, and under the garb of zeal for the Church, tacitly established his own supremacy. *Symmachus* ascended the Roman chair amid a scene of blood and slaughter, occasioned by his election. The council Palmare, A. D. 498, settling his right to the Roman see, for the first time established the position, by the instigation of *Symmachus*, *that the Pope is accountable to God only* ; by which they exalted him even above the reach of councils, and laid the first foundation for his future pretensions of infallibility. *Ennodius*, that extravagant flatterer of *Symmachus*, found the opinions of his time so favourable to the wishes of these lordly pontiffs, that he maintained in his *apology for this council* :



the Roman pontiff was constituted *judge in the place of God* on earth. Thus, before the close of this period, the Western Churches seem to have acknowledged and supported the Roman pontiff in his pretensions to spiritual supremacy in the Christian Church ; at least to the extent necessary, in order to produce the effects ascribed to his fall by this prophecy. For these prophetic periods only determine the commencement and progress of these judgments, until all the features of the images in the prediction are realized ; the consequent effects of them may yet be felt, for centuries after their accomplishment.

*And there fell a great star from heaven.* By the figure of this expression we are induced to contemplate the Church of Christ in comparison with the firmament of heaven ; and by the term ἀστὴρ μέγας, *a star of primary magnitude*, we are invited to pre-suppose other stars, of the same size and bulk. This was actually the case with the bishop of Rome, when compared with the patriarchs of Constantinople, Antioch and Alexandria ; who according to this passage, were not considered inferior in rank and office, even in the estimation of Heaven. Καίόμενος ὡς λαμπάς, should be rendered *flaming like a torch*, which is often the signification of λαμπάς, Acts xx. 8. lxx. Gen. xv. 17. Jud. vii. 16. Zech. xii. 6 ; and may refer to the lustre of genuine Christianity, and the true spirit of the gospel ministry, as well as the fame of the bishop of Rome anterior to this period, in which he shone forth from his eminent station, to great advantage until his fall.

Ἀψινθος, which we have rendered *wormwood*, signifies a thing poisonously bitter, Deut. xxix. 18. and is here put in the place of a proper noun : as for example, MARA, Ruth i. 20. and Jerem. xx. 3. MAGUR MISSABIB, *terror all about*. It seems to bear an allusion to Exod. xv. 23. where Israel came panting to the waters of Marah, and could not drink ; as a representation of the mournful situation of the children of God in the Western

churches, from the commencement of this period. *Rivers* here signify the Evangelical doctrines of the gospel, as conveyed by public institutions of instruction; Isa. xliii. 20. Zech. xiv. 8. Jer. xxxi. 9. Joel i. 20; and *fountains* denote the Sacred Scriptures and the Divine ordinances, from whence they flow. Isa. xii. 3. These waters are pleasant, and salutary for the promotion of spiritual life and happiness in themselves, when permitted to flow uncorrupted; but the Roman pontiff embittered these fountains, and wholesome streams, to a poisonous degree. The word of God was clouded with false glosses, and perverse interpretations; tradition, and the follies of council were extolled, to an equal degree of credibility with the Holy Scriptures; the divine precepts of religion adulterated by an immense mixture of human inventions, and all classes of public teachers allured, or compelled to inculcate these corruptions into the minds of the multitude. These wicked innovations exasperated the intelligent, and caused much bitterness, distress, and sorrow in the world. Many men spiritually died of the waters, who were beguiled to swallow them in their embittered sense with avidity, and trusted in the supplications of saints, pilgrimages to their sepulchres, image-worship, the singular efficacy attributed to the bones of martyrs, and a torrent of superstition, which now began to eclipse the splendour of primitive Christianity. But a great number also died natural deaths, in consequence of the assassinations, massacres, and civil wars, which were waged in consequence of the schism, occasioned by the fall of this Roman star. Thus the third portion of the waters in the western third part of Christendom, became wormwood, and the other two thirds yet remained wholesome doctrine, for those who were able to distinguish.

## IV. TRUMPET ACCOMPLISHED FROM A. D. 522—TO 572.

Verse 12. And the fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars; so as the third part of them was darkened, and the day shone not for a third part of it, and the night likewise.

This trumpet is chiefly distinguished from the preceding one, by its universality, pourtraying the situation of the whole Church of Christ under the pressure of general calamities; the fountain of which was now opened within her own bosom, and threatened to deluge her for ever. I see no reason, why we should not proceed to explain the figures of this trumpet, in concordance with those of the foregoing; since St. John continues this prophecy by the same class of images, and in a connected view. There, *heaven* signified the Church of Christ, and the *star* an eminent bishop; and here he proceeds to inform us, of the effects of the fourth trumpet on all the rest of the heavenly luminaries, and thus by completing the whole scenery, finishes the representation of the general state of Christendom.

The *sun*, the source of all light and nutrition on earth, signifies the gospel of Jesus Christ, Mal. iv. 2. and the *moon*, which only reflects the light of the sun, the Christian worship as comprehending ceremonies and Church discipline, Isa. xxiv. 23. the *stars*, the ministers of the Church, Dan. xii. 3. the *day*, when we enjoy the benefit and influence of the sun, the state of genuine, practical religion, Rom. xiii. 12. and the *night*, when only a faint visage is afforded by the borrowed light of the moon, denotes the religious state of the Jews, under their ceremonial law, Rom. xiii. 12. Math. iv. 16. Luke i. 79; or the state of letters and philosophy.

Here we behold a prophetic representation, of that visible decline of all human and divine knowledge, and the ensuing profound darkness and ignorance, which broke in upon all Christendom, in consequence of the invasions of the Barbarians, by historians called *the barbarity of the middle ages*. Both religion and literature suffered a fatal shock by the incursions of these Asiatic and German nations, who during their invasions sacrificed the lives of many geniuses and men of science, razed the churches, destroyed many libraries, schools and academies, works of art, and other means for the promotion of useful knowledge. They had no respect for religion, and held arts and sciences in perfect contempt. And though these scenes of horror and desolation were now past, the Barbarians had formed settlements in almost every part of the Roman territories, and divided the Western provinces, where they established kingdoms for themselves, and only encouraged military skill and bravery. However, anterior to this period, many of every class of society were yet living, who had been educated in more auspicious times. But now when also these worthies were locked up in the chilling arms of death, the celestial luminaries of the Church were eclipsed, and one third of their light withdrawn from the world.

This was equally the case with divinity, with letters and philosophy. There were but few divines, who possessed penetrating views, and an accurate knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, or who were able to give a rational explanation of the Christian doctrine. Even the sacerdotal and monastic orders had departed from their primitive simplicity, and spread a thick cloud of fantastic notions and superstition over the evangelical light and worship; by which thousands were led from the paths of sober faith, and humble piety, into a round of pompous ceremonies, only capable of exciting the veneration of a gazing populace. The councils enacted the observance of many human rites and institutions, and the bishops and patriarchs inculcated



superstitious fancies concerning the worship of images and saints, the fire of purgatory, the efficacy of good works, the power of relics to heal the diseases of body and mind, the public supplications, the holy pilgrimages, and of temples, altars, penitential garments, &c. &c. By these corruptions, the genuine lustre of Christianity was in a great measure eclipsed, and the doctrines of the gospel rendered almost unintelligible to the multitude, to whom it was particularly preached.

The page of history furnishes conclusive testimony of the ignorance, into which all ranks of society so evidently relapsed, from the commencement of this period. Many bishops and the inferior clergy, being incapable to compose their own sermons, read a collection of *Homilies*, made for that purpose; and those who could write exhortations, or the biographies of the saints, were considered as men of great erudition. So destitute of knowledge and true religion was the multitude, that in the East they held those religious fanatics, the *Stilites*, or *Pillar Saints*, in the highest veneration; and all without exception tamely submitted to an enormous burden of ceremonies, and the private confessions to priests, as now for the first time introduced by *Leo the Great*. This dark cloud of ignorance and superstition, which already obstructed every perspicuous view of heaven, was yet greatly increased by those swarms of monks and holy virgins, who hitherto had followed the rules of Augustine, Basil, Antony, Athenasius and Pachomius, and were now since A. D. 529, by a strange enthusiasm, all absorbed by the Benedictine order. These cloistered idlers, who had retired from the world on account of some sore disappointments in love, riches and honour, or from misconceptions of piety, were by their manner of life prejudicial to genuine Christianity. But in addition to this, they likewise excited a most ardent desire for the *relics* of saints and martyrs, and the *antiquities* of the Holy land; which, as it proves the stupid devotion

of a deluded multitude, afforded the monks immense riches, who sold them in every country of Christendom, by reciting lying wonders which these relics should have performed.

Thus the gospel of Christ, the source of all evangelical light and knowledge was smitten, by crushing letters and philosophy in the West, banishing them in a great measure from the seminaries in the East, and by introducing superstition. The moon, or Christian worship was eclipsed, by a cloud of human rites and ceremonies, through which its primitive simplicity was no longer visible. The stars, or ministers of the gospel lost one third part of their former lustre in faith, in spirit, in assiduity and usefulness. The day of vital religion and practical piety was darkened, and the light of the Church consisting in good and acceptable works to God, obscured by self-righteousness and superstitious institutions. The night, or religious state of the Jews under the moonlight of their ceremonial law, was equally effected by this judgment; and could no longer afford that degree of faith, hope and confidence, necessary to dissipate the gloom of doubt and despair, arising from the state of the world in those days. Also this remnant of the Old Testament Church, was oppressed by great calamities during this period, both in the Roman empire and in the East, towards the dissolution of the Persian monarchy, under the reign of *Cabades* and *Chosroes*. They appear to have yet been in a prosperous condition, when the *Talmud* of *Babylon* was completed A. D. 500, and sealed 505;\* and the dignity of Prince of the Jews, or the title of *Aechmalotarcha*, was taken from *Rab Pachra* and conferred on *Mar Eutra*, by the favour of the Persian king. But about the year 522 the Persians commenced a dread-

\* For the confirmation of these dates, Bengelius refers to the book *Seder olam zuta*, and to the book *Juchasin*. See also Eichhorn's *Einleitung* in V. T.

ful persecution against the Jews, by which they were almost totally extirpated. *Mar Rab Isaac*, president of the academy, and *Mar Entra*, were killed, and the house of David fled. A. D. 540, all their academies were barred, and so great was the oppression, that they could not elect another president for 50 years. *R. Chanan* was the first, A. D. 589, in whom commenced the line of Rabbies, or Jewish doctors, called *geonim*, or excellencies. By these means also the *night*, or the Jewish Church, shone not for a third part of it. And thus this deluded people, by their assiduity and obstinacy in collecting and sealing the Talmud, assisted their enemies in depriving themselves of those celestial rays of light, which would yet have diffused a third part of Divine knowledge and comfort over their shadowy path of life, for their final recovery.

Of these heavenly luminaries it is said, they were *smitten*. The original *πλησσω*, (whence *πληγη*, a plague, a torment) is often made choice of by the lxx. interpreters to signify *I take hurt*, 2 Sam. xi. 15. *become lame*, 2 Sam. iv. 4. *may be overcome*, Numb. xxii. 6. and does not appear to indicate an ordinary eclipse according to the course of nature. Bengelius explains it by the Jewish expression *likkuth*, *percussio*, which they used to signify a common eclipse of the sun or moon; but to me, this general eclipse of all the heavenly bodies points out a course of retributive measures, by the extraordinary and sudden interference of a superior power, different from the natural train of events. Thus both Pagans, Christians, and Jews seemed united, by a parity of Divine judgments, to effect the same object, though from very different motives, and with various designs. Ezek. xxxii. 8. All the bright lights of heaven will I make dark over thee, and set darkness upon thy land, saith the Lord God.

## FIRST INTERVAL OF FIFTY YEARS.

*A preparatory vision to the subsequent two trumpets.*

Verse 13. And I beheld, and heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth, by reason of the other voices of the trumpets of the three angels, which are yet to sound.

The three last trumpets are in a particular manner distinguished from the preceding: first, by being foretold as to their important contents; secondly, by being termed wo-trumpets; and thirdly, by having extraordinary periods of time annexed to them, by which their calamities are limited. Though both the Church and the Roman empire had been sadly afflicted under the sound of the former, yet those distresses are not called *woes*; which may indicate, that the greatest, and by far the most poignant calamities were now to follow in consecution, before the mystery of God could be accomplished.

St. John beheld, and heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven. The Vulgate, and most ancient versions read *ἄετος* here, *an eagle*, instead of *ἄγγελος*, *an angel*; and both Bengelius and Griesbach prefer this reading, as being found in the most ancient and best copies. It is a customary figure in the Sacred Scripture, to represent the children of God by the symbols of eagles, to denote their heavenly dispositions, and contempt of the world, Isaiah xl. 31. Ps. ciii. 5. and their sagacity to espy danger, and penetrate into the deep councils of God. But this eagle seems to designate the zealous and affectionate testimony of faithful ministers, concerning the corrupt state of the Church, and the approaching judgments of these woes, prior to the commencement of the fifth trumpet; which they bore in all their ministerial labours with peculiar energy and effect, by means of a Divine animation. How-



ever, the *loud voice* of this eagle seems to have a particular reference to those, who wrote on the Apocalypse at that time, and thus made their voice echo through the midst of the Church, and to distant countries.

This awful denunciation, *wo, wo, wo*, is made to *the inhabitants of the earth*, which expression comprises all the countries formerly in the power of the Romans, whether their inhabitants were Christians, Jews or Heathens; though with this distinction, that these calamities would chiefly affect the earthly-minded, who only live to enjoy this world. Such an earnest and Divine declaration would surely indicate that the happiness, the lives and salvation of millions are concerned in the accomplishment of these woes; the destructive consequences of which on the prosperity of Zion, have been experienced even to the present century.

These woes answer to the following trumpets, and predicting the peculiarly distressing nature of their contents, seem to have a more particular relation to the *extraordinary numbers*, annexed to the ordinary periods of the trumpets, by which their commencement and duration within the limits of the Church, are circumscribed. The trumpets themselves comprise a much larger scope than the woes, and have a more protracted time of continuance; since they require the addition of both prophetic numbers, for their completion. Hence the woe under each trumpet may begin sooner, or later, with the time of that trumpet, but can never exceed that period. My computation always determines the commencement of each trumpet with accuracy, and the time when these woes cease *in the Church*, but not the duration of these judgments among the Pagan nations of the earth. They are termed woes, only in regard to their effects on Christendom, and not with respect to their consequences among the Heathen; where they may still continue, after they have ceased to afflict the Church. Those remarkable forms of expression, prefixed

to each woe: ch. viii. 13. *Woe, woe, woe*; and chap. ix. 12. *One woe is past; and, behold there come two woes more hereafter*; and ch. xi. 14. *The second woe is past; and, behold the third woe cometh quickly*; require three intervals, one before each trumpet, of which the third is much shorter than the two first, whose length must be intercalated *before* the periods of the trumpets, and can only be determined with certainty by completion. After a scrupulous and careful review of the whole system, I have adopted fifty years for the two first woes, and ten for the third.

And here the great imperfection of most former computations of prophetic time, appears self-evident. The learned Bengelius, not having discovered the ordinary numbers in this series of prophecies, could only commence his computation from the time of the woes; and left all the preceding predictions to be arranged by the ingenuity of man. The defenders of the *yearly-day* act more arbitrarily still. Some adopt seven periods, into which they press all, even the most heterogeneous matter. Others rend the whole prophecy into two, three, or four prophetic series; as a man in a large edifice, having lost the passage to the gate, would break through the wall, to save his honour. Thus they commence so many new courses of events from necessity, neglect to notice the above intervals which the text loudly calls for, and totally slight the beautiful internal order of this book, without the most strict observance of which, no expositor can expect to succeed.

This admirable intrinsic order of the Revelation, divides the prophetic numbers, at the commencement of the woes, into two distinct columns. The three woes join extraordinary numbers to the ordinary prophetic chronology, by which their periods are protracted above the time of ordinary periods, and run on in a separate column for themselves. And the ordinary prophetic chronology extends itself by a consecution of ordinary periods, which point out the lineage of the Church in a parallel column. Both columns run on to the commencement of the third

woe; where they determine the exact dates of all the special lines, into which the whole progressive system of prophecies branches out from this point. These lines synchronize with, and run on during the sound of the seventh trumpet, to the completion of the seventh vial, and to the glorious appearance of the woman in the wilderness, the acknowledged bride of the Lamb.

## CHAPTER IX.

### V. TRUMPET, ACCOMPLISHED FROM A. D. 622—TO 751.

Verse 1. And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth: and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit.

2. And he opened the bottomless pit; and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit.

3. And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth; and unto them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power.

By this prophecy under the fifth trumpet, we are informed of the contents of the *first* woe, as occasioned by the locusts, arising out of the smoke from the bottomless pit. The prelate Bengelius here beheld those dreadful calamities of the Jews in Persia, part of which have been related under the fourth trumpet; and professor Yung explains this prediction as accomplished by the Crusades to the Holy Land. Though I highly esteem the labours of these justly renowned men, and have pondered their arguments with caution and solicitude; yet my mind has remained incontrovertibly attached to that more ancient opinion, of referring these locusts to the *Saracens*, for the following reasons.



1. This prediction most evidently represents the rise and successful establishment of a false religion, by which the gospel of Christ, and even reason itself is obscured in certain countries; which was not the case in Persia.
2. The locusts designate the origin of a new power in the world, which had not existed before the opening of the bottomless pit.
3. These locusts are represented like invading armies in march, destroying every thing before them; which was not the case with the Persians, who only persecuted the Jews at home in their own country. This might however apply to the Crusades, but their time is by some centuries too late for the period of this prophecy.
4. The star had fallen upon the *earth*, the continent of the Roman empire, where it had not before existed, and must for this reason admit of being pointed out on the page of history. This characteristic cannot be identified in the persecutions of the Jews by the Persians; nor will it accord with the crusaders, all of which were citizens of countries, formerly belonging to the Romans.
5. It has been argued that Mahomed never was a doctor or minister of the Church, and could therefore not be represented by a *star*. To which I answer: This emblem is used in Scripture to designate men of great talents, enterprize and usefulness, both in Church and state, Dan. viii. 10. Isa. xiv. 12. ch. li. 16. ch. xlix. 13. ch. xlv. 23. Math. xxiv. 29. within the limits of Christendom; which may properly be applied to Mahomed, who himself was acquainted with the gospel, and lived in Arabia, where Christianity had been preached to stated Churches for centuries.

But in order to illustrate this point more minutely I would observe, that the regular clergy of the Church only, are designated in Scripture by fixed stars, and by planets which revolve in stated revolutions through their orbits, Isa. xiv. 13. Dan. viii. 10; and false teachers by new and unusual comets, or wandering stars, Jude v. 13. Job xxxviii. 32. *MAGADOTH*, *signa cœlestia*; and such a one seems to be intended in this place. These comets become a very striking figure of false teachers, when considered under the general, and more vulgar conception of them among the ancient Asiatics; amongst whom Chaldea appears to have been the cradle of astronomy, and the guide of public opinion on that subject, for many centuries. The ancient *Magi*, or wise men, at first considered comets a sort of *erratic meteors*, of prodigious size; the combustible matter of which, had been collected by certain demons, who aspiring to imitate the Gods, concentrated it as their bodies and habitations. Thus embodied they soar aloft in the air, rush blazing through the vast ether, until they consume themselves or disperse. For they believed all heavenly bodies animated by superior intelligences, and distinguished their excellence, by the different degrees of splendour and magnitude of those luminaries. When therefore false teachers are represented by these wandering stars, they are intimated as wicked men of great talents, in the garb of hypocrisy; as Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. 2 Cor. xi. 14. Such an erratic comet under this conception, seems to be the figure in the language of the apostle. For how could a key be given to a star without hands? Or how could a star open the bottomless pit by a key, if it was not considered animated by an intelligence? These are actions ascribed to a star, which pre-suppose an embodied mind, capable of reflection.

Verse 1. *I saw a star fall*. This is not an accurate translation of the original, *πεπτωκότα*, which is the *part.* of the *perf. pro perf. inf.* and should have been rendered,

*which had fallen*; for St. John did not see its fall, as our common version would induce us to believe. The apostle seems to have chosen this manner of expression, to intimate, that the actual fall of this star happened prior to the sounding of this trumpet, and should only be regarded as a preparation, by which this star became qualified, to be the instrument of this dreadful woe. The appearance of such a star in prophetic writings, indicates the rise, and successful elevation of a great character; and its fall, when it is not thereby extinguished, and still remains a star as in this passage, and ch. viii. 10. either denotes degradation, or degeneracy from virtuous principles and a course of noble actions, into a state of moral ruin, and a train of base, corrupt and vile measures. Thus St. Paul calls the transgression of our first parents *παράπτωμα*, a fall, Rom. v. 15. 17; and our Lord tells the unregenerated Jews Ὑμεῖς ἐκ τῶν κάτω ἐστὲ, ye are from beneath. John viii. 23.

All this has been accomplished in the life of Mahomed; and this prophecy accords with no other event so fully, as with the achievements of the *Arabian* impostor. He is stated by history as of illustrious birth, and by nature eminently endowed with resolution, penetration and a most attractive eloquence for his undertaking. Being brought up to the mercantile employment, he espoused the widow of a rich merchant, and pursued a successful commerce in Arabia, and the adjacent countries, for many years. In his numerous journies, he became acquainted with many nations, countries, and religions, more especially with Jewish worship, and the gospel of Christ, by which his mind appears to have been illuminated, and all the powers of his soul excited to action, for the accomplishment of that glorious enterprize, the conversion of his countrymen from idolatry, to the knowledge of the true and living God. Thus raised up by Providence, he felt a strong impulse, and great courage, to make vigorous efforts for the salva-

tion of his brethren, and commenced his work of reformation A. D. 612 in Arabia, with the best intentions. He was forty years of age, when he publicly professed in the city of Mecca, that God had sent him to overthrow polytheism and idolatry, and to restore the religion of their ancestors, Abraham and Ishmael, in its primitive purity among them. In the prosecution of this laudable undertaking, he discovered a pious disposition to promote virtue, and suppress vice; and, for the space of twelve years, adopted no other than just and righteous means, to further his great designs. He himself confessed, that he was not invested with compulsory power, and would not grant his followers any liberty beyond instruction, persuasion and warning men of their danger. So noble was the disposition of his mind, that when he was persecuted in Mecca, he chose rather to leave his native city, than oppose his enemies by violent measures, which he had in his power.

But this flight of Mahomed to *Medina*, which happened A. D. 622, and its attending circumstances, produced such a total change in this recently good man; that both the disposition of his mind, and the measures which he adopted for the accomplishment of his objects, daily became more violent, base and impious. The star had fallen from heaven, and now degenerated into moral ruin. He projected schemes of conquest and self-aggrandizement, used impious frauds to delude the credulous multitude, and even forged celestial visions to confirm his authority and establish the work he had so happily begun. And to complete the imposture he pretended divine revelations, exalted himself above the inspired prophets and apostles, and even claimed a superiority to Christ the Son of God; demanding implicit faith and obedience of all his followers. All these impious frauds and deceptions, he preached with a spirit of religious phrenzy, and with such a flow of attractive eloquence, as to silence all opposition, and excite a glow of enthusiastic devotion among all his audience.



Verse 2. *And he opened the bottomless pit.* Here our version falls short of the sense of the original. Ἄβυσσος is a noun, and in itself already signifies a gulf of infinite depth, the lowest part of creation ; and Φρέαξ is an allusion to the wells of the ancient Asiatics, and means a deep narrow opening into the earth, walled in at the top, so that it may be secured by a lock. In the sacred Scriptures this word Ἄβυσσος, is used to express the unfathomable depths of creation, such as the depth of the ocean, the atmosphere, the expansion of heaven ; but more especially the great solitary desert of the dead, the world of spirits, Luke viii. 31. Rom. x. 7. Job xxviii. 14. Job xxxviii. 16. 17. Habak. iii. 10 ; where demons are kept in confinement, and the wicked cease from troubling, until the great day of judgment. To this abyss there is an aperture from the human soul, where the τροχὸν τῆς γενέσεως, *the wheel of generation*, the first source of all thoughts and actions in man, may be influenced by the invisible powers of darkness, James iii. 6. But this Φρέαξ, in man, is locked, and none can open it. The key is in the hand of Providence, and was given to Mahomed, who thereby opened a communication with the invisible powers of the abyss, and received assistance from that source to accomplish his purposes. This appears to be the most natural illustration of these important figures, perfectly warranted by the extraordinary events in the life of that impostor, which can never be explained as the effects of a merely human agency, nor yet attributed to the interposition of the Supreme Being. But by considering the subject in this point of view, I would not assert the truth of *magic*, that men have power, except by a *Divine judgment*, to form a connexion with demons and departed souls, for the purpose of producing unnatural and surprising effects. Mahomed sought this forbidden intercourse, as he himself partly confessed, in the cave of Mount Hara, near Mecca, in order to accomplish his ambitious projects, against the opposition of his

enemies. He obtained it by a Divine judgment, on account of his relapse from grace, not only into a state of sin, but even beneath the hopes of recovery by ordinary means. The Divine permission of this intercourse, and the consequent successful practice of those impious frauds, feats and stratagems, is this *key* to the bottomless pit; and the rise and successful propagation of Mahomedism is signified by the *smoke*, which darkened the *sun*, the gospel of Christ in many Christian countries; and the *air*, i. e. reason itself in all his followers.

By the efficiency of this smoke, ascending in thick volleys through the air, his reputation and authority soon extended themselves among the ignorant multitude, and daily increased in his native country. The crowd of his admirers was now seized by the fire of a religious fanaticism and enthusiastic valour, which justified the most sanguine hopes, of seeing all his wishes realized. No sooner did he observe these propitious symptoms, than he began to plan military expeditions, and projected schemes of attacks, which were instantly executed against the opposers of his pretensions. He began by making successful sallies for ravage and plunder, in which his small parties showed that kind of high courage and puissance, which in similar circumstances, proved invincible. Elated by his good fortune, Mahomed now collected an army, took his native city by assault, vanquished tribe after tribe of his own nation, rendered himself terrible by invasions into the adjacent countries, and died A. D. 632 sole lord of *Arabia*, having laid the basis of a new religion, and a new empire in the world.

The spirit of the nation was now roused to a furious intrepidity, and excited to the performance of great enterprises. His followers led immense armies into the neighbouring kingdoms, and into almost all the countries of the ancient Roman empire; just as the natural *locusts*, at times, come forth from *Arabia* by innumerable hosts and

spread into the adjacent countries, where they devour all vegetables, and often produce great distress. *Exod. x. 13.* For this reason the Arabians are often compared to *locusts*, and called by this name also in other parts of Scripture, *Jud. vi. 5. ch. vii. 12*; and large invading armies are represented by this threatening figure, on account of their sudden and ruinous incursions, *Jer. xlv. 23. chap. li. 14.* They conquered *Syria* and *Palestine* with the holy city *A. D. 634*; *Phœnicia*, *Mesopotamia*, *Armenia* and the great *Persian* empire from *A. D. 636—to 637*; and penetrate into the East of Asia, even beyond the river *Ghihoon* into *Samarkand*. They also extended their conquests into Africa, and subdued the islands of *Cyprus*, *Rhodes*, *Sicily* and *Leuca*. The African Moors, who, after being vanquished, had also received the Mahomedan religion, passed with their fleets into Europe, where they conquered *Sardinia*, *A. D. 711*, and the whole kingdom of *Spain* *A. D. 713*. Thus in less than a hundred years after the death of Mahomed, the *Saracens* had extended their territories and dominion into three parts of the world, Asia, Africa and Europe, where they on all sides opposed the progress of Christianity, and in many places effected the ruin of the Church. Their rapid course was however checked by *Charles Martel's* victory, near *Tours*, *A. D. 734*, in which bloody engagement they lost 370,000 men, with the general at their head. This signal triumph on the part of Christendom, seems to have given a reverse of fortune to the Mahomedan invasions; at least they soon discontinued their inroads into other countries, and their power ceased to be destructive to the Church of Christ.

Verse 3. *As the scorpions of the earth have power.* There are three kinds of scorpions; the *sea* scorpions are a kind of fish, the scorpions of the *air* are winged, the scorpions of the *earth* are of the size and form of a crab, with stings in their tails, which are always prepared to do mischief, and are found in *Italy*, *Africa*, and the meridional

deserts of Asia and America. These last are intended here, as an emblem of a treacherous, furious people, who unexpectedly fall on others, and inflict tormenting wounds by surprise; which perfectly corresponds with the character of the *Saracens*, and their descendants, the Arabians. The only alternative to escape misery, was to fly from their presence.

Verse 4. And it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads.

5. And to them it was given that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented five months: and their torment *was* as the torment of a scorpion, when he striketh a man.

6. And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die; and death shall flee from them.

Here St. John begins to comfort the true Christians of those days, who had the seal of Almighty God in their foreheads, by an assurance, that these calamities were limited by Providence to a certain degree, beyond which they should not rise. The *grass* of the earth, *green things*, and *trees*, must here be taken in a figurative sense, as in ch. viii. 7. and in a comparative estimate with the locusts. They signify the sanctified believers, among the different classes of persons in the Church, which according to the religious fanaticism of the Mahomedans, would otherwise have become their first prey; as all green things are the natural sustenance of locusts, and what they mostly desire. These, they were commanded not to hurt. This word ἄδικέω, to hurt, also signifies, *to infringe on another's rights and privileges*, Acts xxv. 10. 2 Cor. vii. 2. Gal. iv. 12. and, I presume this to be the true acceptation in this place. The *Saracens*, for many years treated the



private Christians, whom they found not in arms to oppose them, and especially those who rejected the councils of *Ephesus* and *Chalcedon*, with the utmost lenity and indulgence, and granted them perfect religious liberty; whilst on the contrary they reduced the Pagans to slavery, if they refused to become Mahomedans. Mahomed prohibited his followers by a *Testamentary Diploma* from disturbing the Christians in his dominions in the enjoyment of their religion, or temporal possessions, the genuineness of which the Mahomedans unanimously acknowledge. This testament has greatly mollified the rigour of their measures, and assisted to accomplish this prophecy, by interdicting all public persecutions against the Church of Christ.

As the *seal* of God in their foreheads, here designates the Christian character of true believers, or their publicly confessed and acknowledged membership in the Church of Christ; so those *wanting the seal of God*, are the Pagans, and the unconverted Christian inhabitants of the Roman empire. The first would have been the principal sufferers, during the ravages of these locusts, but were restrained by Providence from public persecution or martyrdom; and in regard to the last, ἐδόθη (ἐξουσία) they had only *received authority* to torment, and not to overwhelm with utter destruction. This word βασανίζω, to torment, however often signifies *to explore, to extort by numerous torments*, and is used to express the pains of the body, and the anguish of souls in hell, Luke xvi. 23; thus indicating the greatest degree of misery human nature can sustain. Such has actually been the deplorable condition of millions, during the Mahomedan invasions. Elated by success and prosperity, these imperious lords of the East, treated the Heathens with the greatest severity, and at last, many Christians without moderation. They made them feel all the rigour of despotism, by loading them with insupportable taxes, and obliging them, like slaves,

to suffer a variety of vexatious and oppressive measures. Fines, confiscation of goods and banishments were the order of the day, whilst those who remained inflexibly firm to their Pagan idolatry, were maimed and tormented in various ways. When the kingdom of *Spain* A. D. 713, fell a prey to their invasions, the sufferings of the Church were incomparably smaller, than the torments of the votaresses of chastity in the power of those brutal violators. Thousands would have preferred death, to the pangs of such a vile defloration of their families, or to being made the subservient victims of such violence in their own persons. And yet, this lamentable state of sufferings prevailed for many years, more or less, in every country conquered by the *Saracens*, without amelioration or redress. These poignant distresses are here compared to the torment, occasioned by the poisonous stings of terrestrial scorpions; which is said to consist in great bodily pain, and inexpressible anguish of soul, when the poison contracts the heart.

Verse 7. And the shapes of the locusts *were* like unto horses prepared unto battle; and on their heads *were* as it were crowns like gold, and their faces *were* as the faces of men.

8. And they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as *the teeth* of lions.

9. And they had breastplates, as it were breastplates of iron; and the sound of their wings *was* as the sound of chariots of many horses running to battle.

10. And they had tails like unto scorpions; and there were stings in their tails: and their power was to hurt men five months.

This description of locusts, contains the distinguishing characteristics of these invading hosts, which so perfectly accord with no other nation, as with the *Saracens*. They are here delineated as vigorous and swift, like *horses of*

*war*; with *crowns*, or *turbans*, *like gold*, as having enriched themselves by their invasions. Their *faces* were like the faces of men, by which are indicated their humane pretensions, of waging all their wars for the purpose of bringing the nations of the world to the knowledge of the only true God, and to the enjoyment of happiness. They had the *hair of women*, a strong desire after carnal pleasures; *teeth* of lions, were much inclined to rage and plunder; *breastplates* of iron, great courage in war; *high-sounding wings*, a boisterous and terrible behaviour during their invasions; *tails* like scorpions, subjecting the vanquished to great oppression and innumerable sufferings, by the execution of rigorous and inhuman laws.

Verse 11. And they had a king over them, *which is the angel of the bottomless pit*, whose name in the Hebrew tongue is Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue hath his name Apollyon.

Natural locusts have no king, Prov. xxx. 27. but these *Saracens* had a powerful leader, the angel of the bottomless pit. According to the tenets of the Chaldean philosophy, and the generally received opinion of the ancient Asiatics, who assigned a ruling angel for every important enterprize, this was a mighty being from the regions of the abyss, by whom they were rallied, urged them on, and directing all their movements. He is designedly mentioned by both his Hebrew and Greek name, in order to intimate, that he would bring great calamities on those, who worship in both these languages; and by his own name, to distinguish him from Satan, who has his angels, and is never called an angel himself. Rev. xii. 7. Math. xxv. 41. Some expositors have considered the fallen star in the beginning of this chapter, and this *Apollyon* to denote the same object; but they are evidently two distinct beings—Apollyon the cause, and Mahomed his instrument. Both names, Abaddon and Apollyon, signify *a destroyer*, and may be regarded as an opposition to the names of our

Lord. His name Abaddon, being his chief character by the instrumentality of Mahomed, as opposed to our Saviour's name Jesus ; and Apollyon, as directly adverse to his name Christ, since Antichrist is termed  $\delta \ \upsilon \iota \delta \varsigma \ \tau \eta \varsigma \ \alpha \pi \omega \lambda \epsilon \acute{\iota} \alpha \varsigma$ , the son of perdition, the son of Apollyon. 2 Thess. ii. 3.

*Their power was to hurt men five months.* This is a prophetic number, which according to that most probable system of computation by the pious and learned Bengelius, comprises a period of 79—1-3 years of our time. And here is another strong proof, for the justness and confirmation of my ordinary system of calculating this series of prophecies. Bengelius' system, though just in itself, as referring to the extraordinary time of particular predictions, stands unconnected with the preceding numbers, and thus loudly calls for the ordinary series of calculation, to determine the commencement of his periods, which are unconnected links in his chain of computation, and only settled *a posteriori*, from the page of history. The ordinary system of calculation refers to the periods of the trumpets, and the extraordinary numbers comprise the time of the woes, as a protraction of those periods ; for the calamities under the trumpets are called woes, from that time, and so long only as they materially affect the Church. If we now add the ordinary time of the trumpet, 50 years, and the extraordinary time of this woe, 79—1-3 to the preceding chain A. D. 622, we have the year A. D. 751, when the power of the *Saracens* ceased to endanger the existence and prosperity of the Church in their dominions, and they made no more excursions of consequence. At least, the fury of their religious fanaticism had abated, when the city of *Bagdad* was built A. D. 762, and their daring intrepidity had settled itself into a more rational calm, where they held the sceptre. In Spain and Portugal at least, the Christians in a few years regained Gallicia, Leon, a part of Old Castile and of Portugal, and since 778, also Navarre and Ca-



talonia, which they kept in constant possession; while in other parts, they met with no considerable loss from this time.

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## SECOND INTERVAL OF FIFTY YEARS.

Verse 12. One woe is past; *and*, behold, there come two woes more hereafter.

To facilitate a more perfect knowledge of these prophecies, the Church of Christ should be considered the centre of the prophetic horizon in these visions, and the most endearing object of divine solicitude, to which every prediction has a principal reference. This is more particularly necessary in regard to these woes, and the three preceding intervals, in which the woes are anticipated. The word *απῆλθεν*, *it is past, gone by, expired*, does not necessarily require, that the calamities of the former woe must have totally ceased every where, even among Pagan nations. It only informs us of a pause, during which these poignant distresses to the amount of a woe, shall cease to affect the Church in essential parts, and no new enemy suffered to rise up against her, and cause fresh disasters within her pales. This, in my opinion, is an elucidation of the true sense here, and ch. xi. 14. where the third pause or cessation is intimated, by a similar form of expression.

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## VI. TRUMPET ACCOMPLISHED FROM A. D. 801—TO 1062.

Vere 13. And the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God,

14. Saying to the sixth angel which had the trumpet, Loose the four angels which are bound in the river Euphrates.
15. And the four angels were loosed, which were prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year, for to slay the third part of men.
16. And the number of the army of the horsemen *were* two hundred thousand thousand: and I heard the number of them.

This prophecy refers to an event of such importance and distinction, that it cannot be considered a difficult task, to point out its accomplishment with perfect assurance, on the ensanguined page of history. The astonishing number of horsemen here mentioned, at once designates Asia as the theatre of these murderous armies; whose military forces, at all times, consisted chiefly of cavalry. But they would not have obtained a place in this prophetic journal of Providence, if they had only been the scourge of Pagans, and not also brought great distresses on the Church of Christ. This trumpet proclaims the judgments of God against the nations of *Asia*, and more especially against the great empire of the *Saracens* upon the waters of Euphrates, and the Asiatic provinces of the *Grecian* empire. In all these countries Christianity had made great progress; and though many had been induced by the Saracens to apostatize, and turn Mahomedans; yet there were many thousand Christians living among the Heathens in those countries, whose lives and fortunes were essentially involved in their fate. St. John seems to consider these judgments as a further effect of the efficacy of the prayers of the saints, chap. viii. 3. 4.; to indicate which, he heard a voice from the four horns of the same altar, upon which the prayers of all saints had been placed. These four angels are neither four great conquerors, nor even so many rulers of nations. Though of universal celebrity, yet these legitimate and ingenious cut-throats,

called most consummate heroes, are nevertheless far too insignificant to be thus represented, even by evil spirits like these. I conceive them, to be the military geniuses of those four great and warlike nations: The *Arabians*, the *Turks*, the *Tartars* and the *Persians*, who during this period rent the empire of the Saracens into many distinct kingdoms and principalities where they now established dynasties for themselves. Though all these nations received the Mahomedan religion, and united into one religious community; they yet waged tremendous and most bloody wars among themselves, and in other countries, where the Christians were largely involved in these revolutionary contests. Perhaps there also were invisible powers of darkness engaged, in the performance of this sanguinary and dreadful tragedy, in which so many tribes and nations, disputed with each other for centuries, to gain the government of the world. For a similar case, I would refer the reader to Dan. x. 20. and ch. xi. 1. where the fatal plans and machinations of evil spirits, have been overruled by the powerful exertions of good angels, and the people of God preserved from impending destruction. 2 Kings vi. 15. 17. These four angels of war had been bound upon the great river Euphrates. That is, Providence prohibited them from bursting the barrier of nations, hitherto preserved among the various and numerous tribes of inhabitants upon the vast banks of the waters of that noted river; who otherwise, long before this time, would have been willing to execute their revolutionary purposes from that part of the world.

The ordinary period of this trumpet is protracted by the following expressions of time: which were prepared *for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year*. If unnecessary quibbles are avoided in exploring the true sense of these words, they will be found to contain the extraordinary numbers, by which the spirit of prophecy has here determined the commencement and different degrees of

this woe ; or that measure of time in which this woe is to be accomplished. During the time of a prophetic hour, day, month, and year, these four nations would all be engaged upon the stage of action in succession, and accomplish the judgments of God here intimated ; but after the expiration of this prophetic term, the calamities occasioned by the wars of these nations, though they might continue with great severity in Pagan countries, would no longer amount to the measure of *a woe* in Christendom. According to the system of computation, most assuredly displayed under the direction of Providence, by the pious prelate Bengelius, the sum total of these prophetic numbers will amount to 212  $\frac{1}{2}$  years. And no doubt, it required centuries in an ordinary course of Providence, where nothing is forced by a miraculous power, for so many nations to join into one religious community ; to raise empires and kingdoms upon the ruin of empires, and exalt one nation to dominion and glory after the other ; and to bring so many nations and armies upon the great theatre of the world, as would amount to two hundred millions of horsemen. This amazing number δύο μυριάδες μυριάδων, St. John supposed, might appear almost incredible to some readers, he therefore expressly affirms, *I heard the number of them.* But when we consider the immense theatre and periphery of these nations, and of the Saracen empire at the commencement of this period, upon which all these nations and tribes of nations were in continual motion, to invade and subdue each other, as the waves upon a tempestuous sea ; if we credit the accounts given in profane history, of the astonishing armies, and trains of armies, which these Asiatics were accustomed to bring into the fields of battle ; this number will by no means appear so improbable, during a period of 262 years, and amidst such general revolutions in the world. *Bajazet* is said to have had an army of fourteen, and *Tamerlane* of sixteen hundred thousand men ; and what amazing armies must have



been those of *Temudschin*, who often cut down three and four hundred thousand of his prisoners of war, in a day ! But this period of 212  $\frac{1}{2}$  years only determines this woe, and the armies may be counted to the destruction of these dynasties.

This trumpet commences at the close of the second interval, called for in the text, A. D. 801. If we now add the ordinary time of this trumpet, h. e. 50 years, which has a more particular reference to the preparation of the angels, this *second woe* will commence A. D. 851, and terminate A. D. 1063; all which perfectly corresponds with the dates of the remarkable events alluded to, on the page of profane history.

The empire of the Saracens had attained the zenith of glory and grandeur, when the Khalif *Al Raschid* died in the beginning of this period, and divided his vast dominions among his three sons. *Al Amin* obtained Syria, Erak, Arabia, Mesopotamia, Assyria, Media, Palestine, Egypt, and what we now call the states of Barbary. *Al Mamun* took possession of Persia, Kerman, India, Khorasan, Tabresta, Zablestan, and the enormous province of Mawarennahr. *Al Kasem* was to govern Armenia, Natio-  
lia, Georgia, Circassia and the large countries along the Black Sea. What an enormous empire in circumference—what a stupendous power, almost capable of engrossing the whole earth; and yet by this division, the Khalif *Al Raschid* laid the foundation for its downfall, and the ruin of his Khalifat for ever. His three sons waged intestine wars against each other, for the right of succession; and the last of them who maintained his throne, governed by his prime ministers, with an unsteady hand, from 813 to 833. During his reign, *Ibrahim*, one of his governors, laid the foundation for the government of the Aglabido at Kairwan, whilst he lost the Easterly provinces by the imprudence of his general *Taher*. In short, the whole Khalifat, from this time gradually lost its bond of union and

this once mighty fabric assumed the appearance of an antiquated castle, tottering to ruin. *Hamun Al Raschid* was the last Khalif who possessed this vast empire entire; and a hundred years after his death, his successors had lost all these countries, and merely retained a Papal power in the Mahomedan community, with the city and province of Bagdad. These four nations, the *Arabians*, the *Turks*, the *Tartars* and the *Persians*, divided the empire among themselves, established kingdoms and principalities upon its ruins, by immense wars, blood and slaughter. As they had all received Mahomedism, and discarded Polytheism and idolatry, the former religion of these nations; they joined a fanatic fury against the Church of Christ, with a flaming enthusiasm for the propagation of the religion of Mahomed, to their thirst for dominion and glory. So numerous were the martyrs, and so many the apostates from the Christian faith, that these infidels had almost crushed the religion of Jesus in Asia.

In order to trace these four angels in their progress, and to bring their several exploits into a more immediate and distinct view; I will here mark the different dynasties established by each of these nations in the Asiatic part of the Khalifat, as regarding their geographical and chronological existence, within the limits of the Saracen empire in Asia.

#### I. ARABIAN DYNASTIES,

1. Of the Taherides in Khorasan 820—872.
2. Of the Hamadanides in Syria and Mesopotamia 892—1014.
3. Of the Fatimides in Syria 969—1171.
4. Of the Okailides in Erak or Chaldea 990—1086.
5. Of the Mardasides in Syria and Mesopotamia 1014—1084.
6. Of the Asadites in Chaldea 1026—1150,

7. Many inferior dynasties have been established, more especially by the house of Ali in Arabia, and in other parts of the Saracen empire during this period.

## II. PERSIAN DYNASTIES,

1. Founded by the Barmakides in Persia 801.
2. Soffarides in Khorasan, Tabarestan, Sedschestan, Fars and Dschebal 872—902.
3. Samanides in Mawarennahr, and in Persian countries 874—1000.
4. Dailemites in Dailem, Gilan, Dechordschan, Tabarestan, and in almost all Persia, 927—1012.
5. Buides in Persia, Bagdad, (in the character of Emir Al Omrah) Erak, Kuzistan, Oman, Mosul, Diarbekr, 933—1055.
6. Merwanish Kurdes in Syria and Mesopotamia 984—1085.

## III. TURKISH DYNASTIES,

1. Founded by the Telunides in Syria 868—905. During the reign of the Khaliff *Motasse'm* 841, the Turks made their first successful efforts against the Khalifat. *Motawakkel* lost his life by his Turkish life-guard 861, and *Mostain* by the same A. D. 862, his throne. *Achmed* was the first Turkish governor, who made himself sovereign lord in the empire and founded the Telunidan state in Egypt and in part of Syria, A. D. 868.
2. Ichschidides in Syria 935—968.
3. Gaznevids in a part of India, in Persia and Mawarennahr, 975—1183.

## IV. TARTAR DYNASTY.

That fierce and warlike people, which under the command of Togrul Bek, or Tangrolipix, established a great

and powerful empire in Asia since A. D. 1037, upon the ruins of the Arabian Khalifat, have been incorrectly called Hungars, Huns, and Turks. Their native country is not the province Turkestan, to the East of the Caspian Sea, properly the country of the Turks; but their country is that vast region between the rivers *Irtisch* and *Sihon*. They are a *Tartar tribe*, who were compelled by the perpetual invasions of the *Chinese* and the people of *Cathay*, to leave upper Asia, and remove to the South; which they accomplished under their great commander Seldschuk, by whose name they distinguished themselves and their dynasty in succeeding times. At first they acted as auxiliaries to the Khan of Turkestan, but soon after an open rupture, invaded his country with fire and sword. They, at last, settled themselves near the city Bochara in Mawarrennahr, and received the Mahomedan religion. Here Mahmud found them A. D. 999. when he established the Gaznevids dynasty upon the ruins of the Samanides, and permitted them to settle in Khorasan against the advice of his ministers, which he soon regretted as an impolitic measure. Togrul Bek began his heroic career A. D. 1034, at the head of his warlike Tartars, and by a number of well improved victories, subdued all the countries from the little Buckharia and the Indus, to Jerusalem and Nice in Bythynia, and died A. D. 1063, sole lord of this vast and well established empire.

Here we stop. This trumpet only refers to the judgments of God against the nations of Asia, and the seventh trumpet proclaims the judgments against the nations in Europe. The conquests and establishments of the Ottoman empire, are not included in this trumpet; we shall meet with it in ch. xii. under the emblem of a flood of water, which the serpent cast forth after the woman, in order to carry her away.

If we now take a retrospective view of this tremendous scene of revolutions in Asia, during a time of more than



two centuries, in which so many kingdoms and dynasties have been established, destroyed, and founded anew, and all this upon the wrecks of a well organized empire; we may perhaps not find the armies of all these Asiatic nations much inferior, to the number expressed in this prophecy. For the amount of these armies and roaming tribes of nations, should be taken, from the commencement of their preparation for these bloody scenes, to the extinction of their dynasties, beyond the close of this prophetic period, determining only the duration of this woe, which will, no doubt, rise to an amazing sum. And if we consider all the blood and slaughter in battles, the lives lost, by that dreadful train of consequences attending such a warfare, the sanguinary persecutions of these furious fanatics against Christians and Pagans, if they refused to become Mahomedans; we shall be ready to grant, that *the third part of men*, immediately concerned in these terrible scenes during this period, may not have died natural deaths, but by means of these judgments. The expression, "*the third part of men*," does not refer to all the inhabitants of the world, but only to the inhabitants of the Asiatic part of the Saracen empire, and to the Christian provinces in Asia.

Verse 17. And thus I saw the horses in the vision, and them that sat on them, having breastplates of fire, and of jacinth, and of brimstone: and the heads of the horses *were* as the heads of lions; and out of their mouths issued fire, and smoke, and brimstone.

18. By these three was the third part of men killed, by the fire, and by the smoke, and by the brimstone, which issued out of their mouths.

19. For their power is in their mouth, and in their tails: for their tails *were* like unto serpents, and had heads, and with them they do hurt.

This is an emblematical representation of this terrible army of horsemen, in which their distinguishing charac-

teristics from other armies, are professedly delineated; that the believer in this prophecy might take notice and warning, when it should actually appear upon the stage of action. St. John beheld them, full of martial fire and courage, as indicated by their *breastplates*; which according to the different customs of these nations, actually were of the three colours here mentioned. They appeared fierce and powerful, as *lions*, roaring for their prey; and from their mouths proceeded *most severe and peremptory commands*, orders and sentences, for plunder, torment, death, and heinous destruction. *Their power was in their mouths*. For it had been given to these commanders to inflame their whole armies with a cruel, ferocious, and frenetic spirit of war, for the execution of plans, which humanity would otherwise have shuddered to accomplish. What such a general, at the head of a nation, will be able to achieve, we have but lately witnessed in France. Their tails signify both the pillaging trains of their armies, who immediately took possession of the whole country, and of every thing in it; and the successors to the thrones of these conquerors, whose governments were like unto serpents, full of crafty, subtle policy and of a poisonous, deadly effect to the prosperity of their conquered countries. History testifies these to have been the distinguishing features in the character of these nations, and the dreadful complexion of their wars, during this period. Thus the Christians in those countries received solemn warning of the wrath to come: in order that they might either withdraw from the field of battle, or join in with the divine purposes, and prepare to meet the enemy in a becoming manner.

Verse 20. And the rest of the men, which were not killed by these plagues, yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood; which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk.

21. Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts.

The *Saracens* then caused the *first woe* in Christendom, in propagating Mahomedism by a tormenting war of conquest, with all its attending train of persecutions and vexatious measures; and these *four nations* were the agents of the *second woe*, in establishing it, by still more severe measures of torture and death in every shape. We may expect, that only crimes of general prevalence, and these too of the blackest die, could be sufficient to induce the Lord to permit such heavy judgments on his Church, as are contained in this second woe. And such is truly the nature of the offences, laid to the charge of both Heathens and Christians, as the causes of these dreadful calamities. They were idolatry, murder, sorcery, fornication, and thefts, which kindled the anger of the Lord to inflict these judgments. And these crimes being the distinguishing characteristics of the nations, alluded to in this prophecy, may also enable us to know and determine them, among the nations of the world.

I. They *worship devils*, and *idols* of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood. The word *τὰ δαιμόνια*, in the original, should not be rendered devils, which does not convey the same idea to an English reader; and as we have no appropriate word in our language, better adapted to express that idea, the word *demon* might have remained. This expression in Holy Scripture always refers to Pagan idolatry, 1 Cor. x. 20. 21. because the first Church of Christ knew nothing of image-worship; the Revelation excepted, in which also Christians are accused of this irrational worship of demons. But as the text before us distinguishes between the worship of demons, and the worship of idols, I would consider the first as referring to Pagans, and the last to Christians. Demons are imaginary deities, who once were mortals of renown on earth,

such as heroes, inventors of arts and sciences, or who had otherwise been a blessing to cities, countries, tribes, or nations in their time. These after death the Heathens worshipped as Deities, and mediators between the superior Gods and men, under the title of demons. 1 Tim. iv. 1. Acts xvii. 18. All the nations of Asia were worshippers of demons, except the Mahomedans and Persians, which last adore God under the emblem of fire, and the sun. It is worthy of remark, that the instruments of this woe, were not properly worshippers of demons, though they otherwise have been guilty of many crimes; and, to the eternal shame of idolatrous Christians, are most inveterate enemies to the worship of images and saints, to this day.

II. They worship *idols* of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood. These words evidently allude to *image worship*, and to that stupid veneration for the bones and carcasses of saints, which was first begun in Greece, about the year 590. After a terrible flame of controversy, attended with such fatal consequences to religion and government, both in the Eastern and Western part of the empire, this idolatrous worship was firmly established by two councils assembled at *Constantinople*, in the years 863 and 871. Since that time, this superstitious phrenzy became universal in the Greek Church; and that deluded people, to express their most signal approbation of the frenetic enthusiasm of this council for the introduction of this species of gross idolatry, have instituted the *feast of orthodoxy*, as an anniversary festival to commemorate this decree. The abettors of image worship were also triumphant in the Romish Church, loud and powerful as the testimony of European Christians has been against it, since the time of Charlemagne; wherefore the third woe is suffered to fall on them with equal severity, and during a much longer period of time.

III. They are also charged with murders, sorceries, fornication and thefts. *Murders of the saints and martyrs*



of Jesus, as evinced by their oppressive conduct against many seceding Christians, especially in those sanguinary persecutions of the *Paulicians*, between A. D. 845—950, by the Creek Church; when these firm and faithful servants of the Lord fled before the brutal rage of their persecutors from Asia to the Danube. *Φαρμακεία*, *sorcery*, signifies the art of poisoning in a clandestine manner, as it here stands united to notorious murder. But the most pernicious mode of poisoning is performed by arts of magic, and John has here used a Greek word, which ch. xviii. 23. properly signifies sorcery. History also informs us, that necromancy and the magic art was very much in vogue in the East, and practised to great extent about this time. *Fornication* here signifies all unlawful and unnatural lusts; and *theft*, robbing men of their estates. History abounds with instances of these wicked and abominable practices in the Grecian empire, and more especially in the Eastern provinces, during the seventh, eighth and ninth centuries; by which they challenged the Lord to their own destruction. Though they were guilty of such heinous crimes against the dictates of religion, and the remonstrances of conscience, and had thus violated their most sacred obligations towards God and society;—Though already scourged and severely reprehended by the judgments of this woe; yet they might have repented of their sins at the feet of Jesus, and would have found pardon with a merciful Saviour, and the aids of his Holy Spirit, in order to break their criminal connexions with sin and sinners, and attain to a new life. But such as remained impenitent, and would not abstain from their presumptuous sins, and insolent practices, are threatened with the third woe, 2 Thes. ii. 10. 12. and in case of further obduracy, with still severer judgments under the vials of wrath.

The authorities, for the historical facts alledged in the explanation of these woes, are Gibbon, Mosheim, Shrœck,

Gatterer, Walch, Arnold, some historical dictionaries, and the Encyclopædia, under the different articles treated of in this chapter; where the learned reader may also meet with references to still more ancient authors than these, to satisfy himself on every subject.

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P. S. If this volume, under the auspices of an all ruling Providence, should meet the approbation of the Christian public, the Author is prepared, and will furnish his indulgent readers with the second volume in a short time.

FINIS.











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